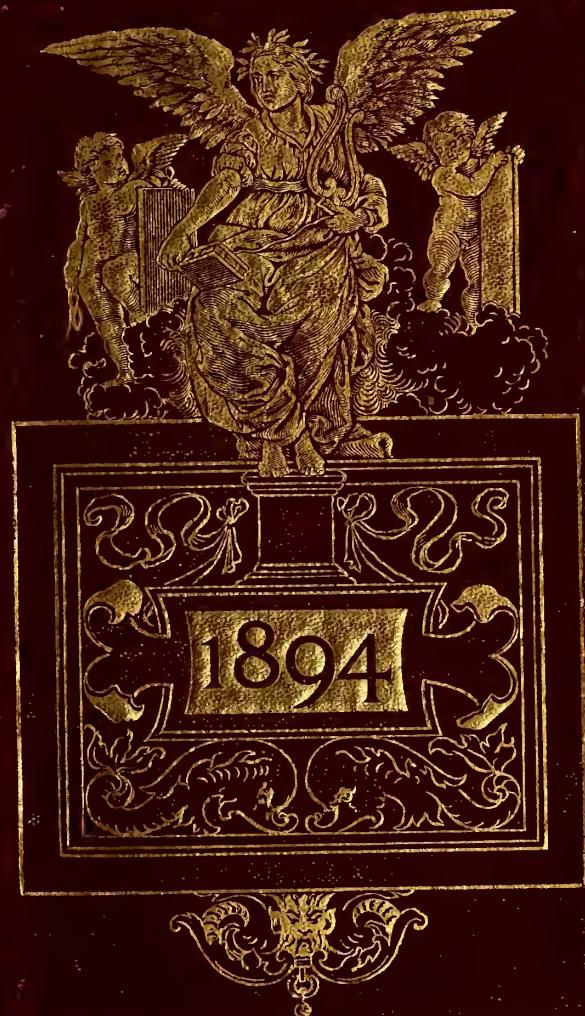


THE
PORTFOLIO





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Sir Joshua Reynolds, R.A.

Walter Colly, Ph.Sc.

The Snake in the grass

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THE

PORTFOLIO

MONOGRAPHS ON ARTISTIC SUBJECTS
EDITED BY P. G. HAMERTON

FAIR WOMEN

By WILLIAM SHARP

THE NEW FOREST ✓

By G. J. CORNISH

T. GAINSBOROUGH

By WALTER ARMSTRONG ✓

LONDON

SEELEY AND CO., LIMITED, ESSEX STREET, STRAND
NEW YORK : MACMILLAN AND CO.

1894

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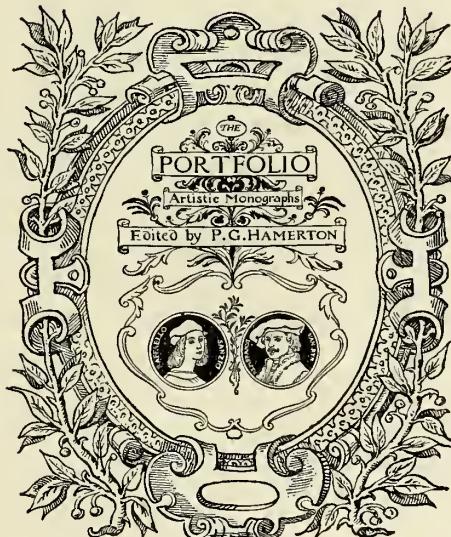
FAIR WOMEN

IN PAINTING AND POETRY

By

WILLIAM SHARP

Author of "Sospiri di Roma," "Life of Heine," &c.



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* * * *The publishers' thanks are due to all who have kindly permitted the reproduction of pictures in their possession.*

FAIR WOMEN

PART I

"Tennyson has no prescriptive right to *A Dream of Fair Women*. Every man dreams this dream. With some it happens early in the teens. It fades, with some, during the twenties. With others it endures, vivid and beautiful under grey hairs, till it glorifies the grave."—H. P. SIWÄARMILL.

I

THE beauty of women : could there be any theme more inspiring ? There is fire in the phrase even. But, as with "Love," "Life," "Sunshine," "the Sea," "Death," the subject at once allures and evades one. It would be easier to write concerning it a bulky tome than a small volume, and that again would be less difficult than a sketch of this kind. Who can say much about love, without vain repetitions ? Only the poet —whether he use pigments or clay, words or music—can flash upon us some new light, or thrill us with some new note, or delight us with some new vision. There is nothing between this quintessential revelation and that unaccomplished and for ever to be unaccomplished History of Love which Charles Nodier said would be the history of humanity and the most beautiful book to write.

What mortal can say enough about the beauty of woman to satisfy himself ? How much less can he say enough to satisfy others ?

"For several virtues have I liked several women" : and we may adapt Shakespere's line, and say that for several kinds of beauty have men admired women as different from each other as a contadina of the Campagna and an Eskimo Squaw.

I realise my inadequacy. I would have my readers understand that if I were to write as I feel, I would speak not wisely but too well !

Fortunately, I cannot rhapsodise : but for this, I might win honour in the eyes of ladies, and concurrently a very natural outpouring of envy and all uncharitableness on the part of my fellow-men. Personally, I would have no hard-and-fast dogmas. Fair Women, be they tall or short, dark or fair, vivacious or languorous, active or indolent, plump or fragile, if all are beautiful all are welcome. You, camerado, may incline towards a blonde, with hair touched with gold and eyes haunted by a living memory of the sky, small of stature, and with hands seductively white and delicate : I, on the other hand, may prefer a brunette, with hair lovely with the dusk and fragrance of twilight, with eyes filled with strange lights and depths of shadow, tall, lissom, and with the nut-brown kisses of the sun just visible on cheek and neck, and bonnie deft hands. Or, it may be, I find Ideala in a sweet comeliness : a face and figure and mien and manner which together allure a male mind searching for the quietudes rather than for the exaltations of passionate life. You, however, may worship at another shrine, and seek your joy in austere beauty, or in that which seems wedded to a tragic significance, or that whose very remoteness lays upon you an irresistible spell. There be those who prefer Diana to Venus, who would live with Minerva rather than Juno : who would rather espouse Syrinx than Semele, and prefer the shy Arethusa to the somewhat heedless Leda. Who shall blame a man if he would rather take to wife Lucy Desborough than Helen of Troy : and has any one among us right to take up a stone against him who would bestow the "Mrs." at his disposal upon Dolly Varden rather than upon Cleopatra?

After all, are the poets and painters the right people to go to for instruction as to beauty ? Most of them are disappointed married men. Every male loves three females : woman (that is, his particular woman), as he imagines her to be ; woman, as he finds her ; and woman, carefully revised for an improbable new edition.

II

In the beginning, said a Persian poet, Allah took a rose, a lily, a dove, a serpent, a little honey, a Dead Sea apple, and a handful of clay. When He looked at the amalgam it was Woman. Then He thought He would resolve these constituents. But it was too late. Adam had taken

her to wife, and humanity had begun. Woman, moreover, had learned her first lesson : conveyed in the parable of the rib. Thus early did the male imagination begin to weave a delightful web for its own delectation and advantage. When, after a time, the daughters of Eve convinced the sons of Adam that a system of Dual Control would have to be put into effect, there was much questioning and heartburning. Satan availed himself of the opportunity. He took man aside, and explained to him that woman had been reasonless and precipitate, that she had tempted him before she was ripe, and that he was a genial innocent and very much to be pitied. Further, he demonstrated that if she had only waited a little, all would have been well. But, as it was, the rose had a thorn, the lily had a tendency to be fragile, the dove had not lost its timidity, the serpent had retained its guile, its fangs, and its poison, the honey was apt to clog, the Dead Sea apple was almost entirely filled with dust, and the clay was of the tough, primeval kind, difficult to blend with advantage, and impossible to eliminate.

From that day, says the Persian poet, whose name I have forgotten, man has been haunted by the idea that he was wheedled into a copartnery. In a word, having taken woman to wife, he now regrets that he committed himself quite so early to a formal union. From his vague regrets and unsatisfied longings, and a profound egotism which got into his system during his bachelor days in Eden, he evolved the idea of Beauty. This idea would have remained a dream if Satan had not interfered with the suggestion that it was too good to be wasted as an abstraction. So the idea came to be realised. There was much hearty laughter in consequence, in "another place." Seeing what a perilous state man had brought himself into, Allah had pity. He took man's conception of Beauty—which to His surprise was in several respects much superior to Eve—and, having dissipated it with a breath, rewove it into a hundred lovely ideals. Then, making of the residue a many-coloured span in the heavens, He sent these back to Earth, each to gleam thenceforth with the glory of that first rainbow.

It is a fantasy. But let us thank that Eastern poet. Perhaps, poor dreamer, he went home to learn that unpunctual spouses must expect reproaches in lieu of dinner, or even, it may be, to find that his soul's Sultana had eloped with a more worldly admirer of Eve. Zuleika, if

he found her, perhaps he convinced. For us he has put into words, with some prolixity and awkwardness no doubt, what in a vague way we all feel about the beauty of women.

For in truth there is no such abstraction as Womanly Beauty. Instead, there is the beauty of women.

Every man can pick and choose. There are as many kinds of women as there are of flowers : and all are beautiful, for some quality, or by association. It is well to admire every type. Companionship with the individual will thus be rendered more pleasing ! As the late Maxime du Camp said somewhere : “ In the matter of admiration, it is not bad to have several maladies.” There are men who, in this way, are chronic invalids. Women are very patient with them.

I do not agree with an acquaintance of mine who avers that his predilections are climatic in their nature. If he is in Italy he loves the Roman contadina, or the Sicilian with the lissom Greek figure : if in Spain, he thinks flashing black eyes and coarse hair finer than the flax and sky-blue he admired so much in Germany : if in Japan, he vows with Pierre Loti that Madame Chrysanthème is more winsome than the daintiest Parisienne : if in Barbary, he forgets the wild-rose bloom and hill-wind freshness of his English girl, to whom when he roams through Britain he makes the Helen to his Paris, forgets for the sake of shadowy gazelle-eyes and languorous beauty like that of the lotus on warm moonlight nights. I wonder where he is now. He has been in many lands. I know he has loved a Lithuanian, and passioned for a Swede : and when I last saw him, less than a year ago, he said his ideal was the Celtic *maigh-deann*. Perhaps he is far distant, in that very Cathay which I remember his saying was a country to be taken on trust, as one accepts the actuality of the North Pole : if so, I am convinced he is humming blithely

“ She whom I love at present is in China :
She dwells, with her aged parents,
In a tower of fine porcelain,
By the yellow stream where the cormorants are.”¹

¹ “ *Celle que j'aime à présent, est en Chine ;
Elle demeure, avec ses vieux parents,
Dans une tour de porcelaine fine,
Au fleuve jaune où sont les cormorans.*”

(Théophile Gautier.)

This is too generously eclectic for me, who am a lover of moderation, and a monogamist by instinct. Nevertheless, I can appreciate this climatic variability. I am no stickler for the supremacy of any one type, of the civilised over the barbaric, of the deftly arrayed over the austere ungarbed ! With one of the authors of *Le Croix de Berny* I can say : “ Dress has very little weight with me. I once admired a Granada gipsy whose sole costume consisted of blue slippers and a necklace of amber beads.”

Nowadays, we have to admire the nude only in sculpture, and that antique. M. Bérenger in Paris, Mr. Horsley, R.A., and a Glasgow bailie have said so.

Well, well, it may be so. But there are unregenerate men among us. Perhaps this new madness of blindness will supersede the old intoxication. Truly, I am

“ Oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phœbus in the morning,
Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream—”

but I have no doubt whatever that others will. Meanwhile we can dream of youth : the youth of the past, the eternal youth, and the hour-long youth we have known ourselves. It is one of the sunbright words. These five letters have an alchemy that can transmute dust and ashes into blossoms and fruit. For those who know this, the beauty of the past is linked to the present tense : the most ancient things live again, and the more keenly. *Antiquitas saeculi juventus mundi.*

Well, sufficient unto this present is the question of the nude ! Let those who will, ignore it. Whatever these may say, there is always this conviction for loyal Pagans to fall back upon—in the words of George Meredith—“ the visible fair form of a woman is hereditary queen of us.”

III

What a blight upon ordered sequence in narrative, phrase dear to the grammarian, discursiveness is ! Yet I cannot help it : to borrow from George Meredith on the subject of fair women, from Lucy Desborough and Rhoda Fleming to Clotilde von Rüdiger and Diana Warwick and Aminta Ormont, is as seductive as the sound of the sea when one is panting on the inland side of a sand-dune. In sheer self-defence I must

find an apothegm so good that it would be superfluous to go further. This is irrational perhaps : but then with Diana I find that “to be pointedly rational is a greater difficulty to me than a fine delirium.” There are Fair Women, and fair sayings about fair women, in each of these ever delightful twelve novels. Epigrammatically, *The Egoist* and *Beauchamp's Career* would probably afford most spoil to the hunter : but here in *Richard Feverel* is the quintessential phrase for which we wait. “*Each woman is Eve throughout the ages.*”

This might have been the motto for the catalogue of the “Fair Women” exhibition at the Grafton Gallery. For, truly, to every lover the woman of his choice is another Eve. He sees in her the ideal prototype. It is well that this is so : otherwise there would be no poetry, no fiction, and scarce any emotional literature save passionate Malthusian tractates !

Despite the resemblance, to a fashion of the moment, in the dressing of the hair of the Graeco-Roman lady who leads off the delightful show in question ; and even of the antique Beauty herself to some among her remote sisters in these latter days ; I doubt if the most fervent idealist would be able to discern his Dream in this particular Fair Woman, or rather this effigy of her, which has been rescued from a mummy-case in Egypt. But the Greek, or Roman, or Graeco-Roman, who may have painted her may have found her passing fair—a face to dream of, to die for ! Thus blithely goes the whirligig of change.

It is not often that picture-gallery catalogues contain either humour or philosophy. There is a naive humour, a genial philosophy, in the prefatory note to that of the Grafton Exhibition. “As,” so the note runs, “there are included certain pictures of Women possibly more celebrated for their historical interest, their influence, or their wit than for their beauty, some exception has been taken to the title of the Exhibition. The Directors, however, do not know of any fixed standard by which such pictures can be judged, and, further, they believe that in the eyes of some one person, at least, almost every woman has been considered fair.”

In other words : “*Each woman is Eve throughout the ages.*” There are many Audreys, alas—indeed, sometimes, within a square mile even, there seems to be an epidemic of Audreys !—but a far-seeing Providence has created many Touchstones. So we will believe that in the eyes of at



Greek or Graeco-Roman Portrait.

least one person each woman has been considered fair : though, to be truthful, "a man may, if he were of a fearful heart, stagger in this attempt," as saith the blithe fool of Arden himself.

After all, these clowns and wenches in *As You Like It* are nearer the poetry of truth than that cynical prose of *fin-de-siècle* sentiment, of which this is an example :—

LADY (*looking at a sketch, then at the Artist*). "So :—this is your ideal woman ?"

ARTIST. "It was."

LADY. "Then you have changed ?"

ARTIST. "Yes. I met her."

As a matter of fact, men who have nothing of the ideal in them are, in the eyes of true women, as a sunless summer. These women, like Clara Middleton of "the fine-pointed brain," have a contempt for the male brain "chewing the cud in the happy pastures of unawakenedness."

Women, plain or fair, do not readily forgive. Man should remember this, when he acts upon what he considers his hereditary right to joke upon the frailties of his enslaved goddess. He is apt to think that they are absolutely reasonless in the matter of their looks, forgetful that marriage is a salve to all prenuptial display ! They do not mind back-handed compliments : they will smile at Victor Hugo when he says that woman is a perfected devil ; they have a caress in their heart for Gavarni when he whispers that one of the sweetest pleasures of a woman is to cause regret ; and they take a malicious entertainment in the declaration of a man of the world like Langrée, that modesty in a woman is a virtue most deserving, since we men do all we can to cure her of it. But they will not forgive Montaigne himself when he affirms that there is no torture a woman would not suffer to enhance her beauty.

"Unfolded only out of the illimitable poem of Woman can come the poems of man."

Thus Walt Whitman. But he does not tell us how variously the poets scan that Poem. What would be the result of a plébiscite among civilised women themselves : if they were given by the Powers that Be the option to be beautiful, to be fascinating, or to be winsome ? The woman who believes herself predestined to be a wife and a mother will prefer the third : the born adventuress will choose the second : the least

domestic will select the first. On the other hand, it might be the other way round. Who can tell? Woman is still the Dark Continent of man. If one were to live to the age of Methuselah, and act on the principle of *nulla dies sine linea*, with every line devoted to the chronicle of woman's nature, the volume would be behindhand even on the day of publication. A copiously margined and footnoted edition would be called for immediately. Even if by that time only one woman were left, there would be prompt need of an appendix. There would also, as a matter of fact, always be a St. Bernard to grumble: "Woman is the organ of the Devil"—a Michelet to say with a smile that she is the Sunday of man—a cynic to hint that love of her might be the dawn of marriage, but that marriage with her would be the sunset of love—a poet to exclaim that she was the last priestess of the unknown.

"Feed me with metaphors," says a poet in a recent romance; "and above all with metaphors of Woman. I know none that do not make me love women more and more."

Did he know his Balzac? Somewhere in that vast repository of thoughts on men and women I recollect this: "La Mort est femme,—mariée au genre humain, et fidèle. Où est l'homme qu'elle a trompé?"

Some day a woman will compile a little volume of women's thoughts about men. These will be interesting. Men will read some of them with the same amazed pain wherewith recently ennobled peers peruse articles on the abolition of hereditary aristocracy.

Here, for example, is one:—

"The greatest merit of some men is their wife."

It was Poincelot, a man, who said this: but let a woman speak—

"Physical beauty in man has become as rare as his moral beauty has always been."

Once more:—

"It is not the weathercock that changes: it is the wind."

Since the days of Troy—or of Lilith—men have delighted in calling women weathercocks.

After all, we have been told many times that one of the principal occupations of men is to divine women: but it was a wise philosopher who added that women prefer us to say a little evil of them rather than say nothing of them at all.

Nos moutons nous attendent.

We have agreed, whether we have been to the Grafton Gallery or not, that there is no such thing as a standard of beauty. There is not even an accepted standard of beauty among those who admire the same general type. To the most favoured dreamer Ideala will still come in at least threefold guise, as those three lovely sisters of the Rushout family whom,



Three Ladies of the Rushout Family. By Andrew Plimer.

not Cosway, but, like him, one of the finest of miniaturists has preserved for our delight. There are a million villages as fair as the one in which we were born, but for us there is only one village. When we quote "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," we have one particular locality in our mental vision, as no doubt the poet of the *Song of Solomon* had when he sang, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge

in the villages." Doubtless, too, he had one particular beloved in view, veiled behind his bardic rhapsody. Each of us has a particular Eve behind the phantom of an ideal type.

Of course there are both "villages" and "Eves" that exist only in the mind. There are dreamers who prefer either when most unsubstantial. "Ma contrée de dilection," says the Flemish novelist Eeckhoud, "n'existe pour aucun touriste, et jamais guide ou médecin ne la recommandera." Some, too, having found an Eve, will crave for her isolation from the rough usage of the common day, lest she fall from her high estate. They are not altogether foolish who can do so, and can say with a young living poet :—

"I fear lest time or toil should mar—
I fear lest passion should debase
The delicacy of thy grace.
Depart ; and I will throne thee far,
Will hide thee in a halcyon place
That hath an angel populace ;
And ever in dreams will find thy face,
Where all things pure and perfect are,
Smiling upon me like a star."¹

This is a temper beyond most of us, who are all hedonists by instinct, and in the bodily not the spiritual sense. Flaubert the man was not representative of us, his weaker fellows. "Je n'ai jamais pu emboîter Vénus avec Apollon," as he wrote to George Sand when she advised him to try domestic happiness or at least a little flirtation.

"But how to know beauty in woman when one sees it, that is the question," said to me a disappointed bachelor friend the other day. "If there is no absolute beauty, and if the type is so much distributed in various guises, how is a man who cares only for dark women to see the insignia of beauty in those who have red hair or yellow, and blue eyes, and are like curds and cream stained with roses in the matter of complexion?"

Alas for these uncertain ones, there is nothing for it but a steady course of gratifying and extending the Appreciative Faculties ! To my querist I replied in the words of Gautier as Edgar de Meilhan : "Go straight as a bullet towards your beauty ; seize her by the tip of her wing, politely but firmly, like a gendarme."

¹ *Granite Dust.* By Ronald C. Macfie.

IV

Doubtless many people visited the Grafton Gallery this summer in the hope of finding their Ideal. Their immediate emotion must have been one of cruel disappointment. In the first room there were many pictured women who had much to recommend them, but few who could boast of unusual good looks. To the fairest one might say, with the poet of "The Moonstar"—

"Lady, I thank thee for thy loveliness,
Because my lady is more lovely still."

Pure enthusiasts, chivalrous visionaries, like Mr. Prangë and his co-directors, and perhaps a few artists interested in technique rather than in the abstract question of beauty in the portraits, could always turn to page 1 of the catalogue, and read over and over that Machiavellian statement with its delightful "*possibly more celebrated for, &c.*" : but the ordinary visitor could only at first wander disillusioned from canvas to canvas, and from room to room, uncertain whether to find a damaged ideal in the robust but self-conscious Flora of Palma Vecchio, or in the artificial and self-conscious court-ladies of Lely, or in the lovely and self-conscious "beauties" of Hoppner and Romney ; in the imposing but tempersome Corinna of Sir Frederick Leighton, or the green lady of Rossetti, or the blue Bianca of Mr. Watts, or the Ellen Terry of Mr. Sargent, or the winsome but ultra-modern Lady Colin Campbell of Boldini. These be shrines : many, and to spare.

Painters and the public have, at the Grafton, for once found themselves in agreement. The majority is united in the conviction that the finest types of beauty are painted by our English masters, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Lawrence, Hoppner, and Romney : in particular, at the Grafton show, by the two last named.

Yet, if this be admitted, one is apt speedily to call to remembrance Titian's neighbouring *Catarina Cornaro*, Lorenzo Lotto's *Lucretia*, or it may be, among the moderns, Mr. Shannon's *Iris*, or Boldini's serpentine beauty, or Mr. Watts's flower-sweet and flower-delicate early portrait of Mrs. Langtry.

Readers may be interested in the results of one method of test. I



G. F. Watts R.A. Pinx

Walter Colgate Sc.

Lil^l Langtry.

enlisted a well-known amateur ; a lady who is herself an acknowledged Fair Woman ; and an eminent portrait-painter : and asked each to specify the three best portraits, everything considered,—the type, the technique, all in all. My friend the connoisseur hesitated, asked some questions, hesitated again, again qualified with several “ifs” and “considerings” and “in its own ways,” but finally declared for (a) Romney’s *Countess of Mansfield*. (b) Hoppner’s *Mrs. Michael Angelo Taylor as Miranda*. (c) Lely’s *Countess of Grammont*.

The Fair Woman’s choice was, of course, doubly interesting. I hoped it might include one portrait of a living woman at least : and was even mean enough to try to bias her. To be sure, I thought she bore a resemblance to one of the portraits in the Centre Room, but may have been mistaken. She was long in deliberating, and begged that each of the three might be named with a fellow of equal, or nearly equal, charm ; but this was an evasion of the difficult quandary towards which she had been inveigled, and could not be permitted. Her final personal choice was for (a) Zurbaran’s *Spanish Lady* ; (b) Titian’s *Catarina Cornaro* ; (c) Lely’s *Countess of Grammont*.

Now came the turn of the portrait-painter, and here, surely, the best testimony lay. But he began with Franz Hals’ *Maria Voogt Claasdr* and Holbein’s *Margaret Tudor* and Jan Vermeer’s delightful *Girl Playing the Guitar*, and before he got further I interrupted him, with the reminder that what was wanted was the pictorial type which most appealed to him as a man rather than as a craftsman, though artistic beauty and worth were to be potent factors in his judgment. After a long argument about the authenticity of each of these fine paintings, we agreed to believe in the genuineness of the Holbein, though not in the sitter’s being that sister of Henry VIII., who, as spouse of James IV. of Scotland—who lost wife, kingdom, and life at Flodden eleven years after his marriage—was grandmother of Mary Queen of Scots ; and to attribute the Franz Hals and the Jan Vermeer to—well, I won’t say whom ! At this juncture an eminent critic positively assured us that the Holbein was by one of the several brilliant French painters who worked in the manner of the great German master, that the Hals was really by Jan Anthonisz van Ravensteyn, and that not Jan Vermeer of Delft, but a somebody else of another place (both names, alas, unknown to us) painted the charming

guitar-player. We stood, trying to recover from our bewilderment, when we were joined for a moment by another equally eminent critic, who



Girl Playing the Guitar. By Jan Vermeer of Delft.

came up with a blithe air and conjectured we were admiring that fine early Rembrandt which the catalogue gave as a Franz Hals. The next moment he had descried a fellow-enthusiast in the exciting game of hap-

hazard attributions, and we overheard him explaining how unmistakably the handiwork of Gerard Terburg was seen in the guitar-player which Mr. Bischoffsheim seemed to believe was by that Delft man, Vermeer.

After this we argued no more. My companion was morosely silent for a time; then suddenly he began to speak about the lovely collection of miniatures and drawings, and, among these, of the Marchioness of Granby's *Lady Westmoreland* and other delightful studies. But he was held to his promise, and so at last, smiling again, he made up his mind, and gave me, as we parted, his three selections: (a) Lely's *Countess of Grammont*; (b) Luini's *Portrait of a Lady*; (c) Mr. Watts's *Mrs. Langtry*.

I was musing on these several sets of preferences, not, of course, without having noted that each of the three puzzled and reluctant judges had selected the famous *La Belle Hamilton*, of Lely, when a wild and unbalanced idea flashed into my mind. This was to drive into the same corner every art critic who was unfortunate enough to be present. The next moment I had realised my folly. No critic, taken seriously, would commit himself. Other art critics might read the report. Then there would be gibes, and unhallowed remarks. However, as there would be little likelihood of any two specialists agreeing, this collapse of my momentary project did not distress me. A diversion occurred, moreover. I saw, pursued, and waylaid a well-known literary man. I would call him a man of letters, but that phrase is one of his pet aversions, as "a literary man" is one of mine. But a courtesy is due to him for what follows: hence my complaisance!

In reply to my question he said that, frankly, he had never cared much for Fair Women in paint, and now cared less than ever; that he knew next to nothing of pre-Victorian art or artists; and then, in the same breath, he was good enough to specify "what are indubitably the three best things at the Grafton." They are (a) Van Somer's *Countess of Derby*; (b) *Mary Queen of Scots* (unknown painter); (c) Lawrence's *Lady Ellenborough*.

"There must be some deep reason for this," I said, when I had recovered from my surprise. "Why do you choose the comely enough but not noticeably good-looking *Countess of Derby*, or that quite certainly wrongly labelled *Queen Mary*, or Sir Thomas Lawrence's vigorously painted but not very winsome *Lady Ellenborough*?"

"Because the Countess was a brick ; Scott should have written a romance about her. Because I've always understood Mary was the most



The Countess of Westmoreland. By the Marchioness of Granby.

beautiful woman of her time, and I'm not going back upon that *now*, seeing that my faith survived the Mary Exhibition ordeal. Thirdly, because Lady Ellenborough was a 'caution,' and cautions o' that ilk have had

an irresistible fascination for me ever since the governess whom I adored in my early boyhood ran off to sea disguised as an apprentice, married a Unitarian parson in the States, and died, very much a caution, after an adventurous and kaleidoscopic career, the owner of the chief gambling saloon in San Francisco."

This was interesting, but it was not art criticism. I turned despondently away, humming to myself the quatrain from the old north-country nursery-ballad of "Rashin Coatie"—

"There was a king and a queen,
As mony ane's been;
Few have we seen,
As few may we see."

Alas! there were so many queens of beauty on the walls, and yet my heart was not lost to one of them! Then I remembered a favourite couplet, by Campion,

"Beauty must be scorned in none
Though but truly served in one"—

and, having thought of and quoted that sweet singer found I had to go right through three stanzas of his, memorable even in the ever-new wealth of Elizabethan love-songs.

"Give beauty all her right!
She's not to one form tied;
Each shape yields fair delight,
Where her perfections bide:
Helen, I grant, might pleasing be,
And Ros'mond was as sweet as she.

"Some the quick eye commands,
Some swelling lips and red;
Pale looks have many friends,
Through sacred sweetness bred:
Meadows have flowers that pleasures move,
Though roses are the flowers of love.

"Free beauty is not bound
To one unmov'd clime;
She visits every ground,
And favours every time.
Let the old lords with mine compare;
My Sovereign is as sweet and fair."

There: all that is to be said about Fair Women, or the Beauty of Woman, is compressed into six short lines. This intangible 'beauty' is

a citizen of the world, and has her home in Cathay as well as Europe, no one age claims her, and Helen of Troy takes hands with Aspasia, and they smile across the years to Lucrezia Borgia and Diane de Poitiers, who, looking forward, see the lovely light reflected in la belle Hamilton, and so down to our own day. And then, once more, Eve individualised for ever and ever ; a challenge to all the world to bring forward one sweeter and fairer than "my Sovereign."

Probably, I thought, since judges so representative as the amateur, the Fair Woman, and the portrait-painter agree in the selection of the Countess of Grammont, there will be discernible in Lely's finest picture a fundamental charm that will appeal to every one. That charm, no doubt, will be distinction. With the Egoist, "my thoughts come to this conclusion, that, especially in women, distinction is the thing to be aimed at."

The familiar canvas was in delightful company. Her sisters-in-Lely were there ; the Princess Mary, afterwards Queen Mary II., as Diana ; the winsome Diana Kirke, the second wife of Aubrey de Vere, twentieth and last Earl of Oxford, a Fair Woman whom personally I much preferred to her famous rival ; Nell Gwynne, the bonnie free-lance ; the charming but not rigorously virtuous Mrs. Jane Middleton, whose relative, John Evelyn, has chronicled her "famous, and indeed incomparable beauty," and some of whose doings are set forth in Anthony Hamilton's celebrated *Grammont Memoirs* ; and the Lady Barbara Grandison, who married the Earl of Castlemaine, found favour in the eyes of Charles II. (who created her Duchess of Cleveland), and was daring enough to wed once more a commoner, though, to be sure, he was the fashionable Adonis of his day, "Beau" Fielding. Besides, there were Hogarth's portrait of the Marchioness of Granby, with which it would have been interesting to compare Mr. Shannon's of the Fair Woman who at present bears that title—his best portrait, many of his admirers think, and certainly one that would have better suited the Grafton Gallery than his *Iris*, charming portrait-picture though that be—the Duchesse de Croy of Van Dyck, and the noble Anne of Austria, by Rubens.

Every one knows *La Belle Hamilton*, the finest of the Hampton Court beauties. In common with *Nell Gwynne* and the *Duchess of Cleveland* this masterpiece of Lely's belongs to the Queen. I wonder how the



The Countess of Grammont. By Sir Peter Lely.

gossipy Anthony Hamilton would have moralised if he had been able to foresee this whim of Destiny. The three ladies themselves might



Diana Kirke, Countess of Oxford. By Sir Peter Lely.

have been more surprised still, if their thoughts could cross the gulf that separates the Stuart Court from the Victorian. Some readers will recall the saying, “*The Count de Grammont’s short memory!*” When that

courtier left England he was followed and confronted by the brothers of “la belle Hamilton,” who, with drawn swords, asked him if he had not forgotten something. “True, true,” replied the Count : who forthwith retraced his steps and, as a chronicler has it, “repaired the lapse by making the young lady Countess of Grammont.” As a painting, this superb work is not only the highest achievement of Lely, but touches the high-water level of Lely’s prototype, Van Dyck. Even the finest of the adjacent canvases of the great Sir Anthony, the *Duchesse de Croy*, and in particular *Dorothy Sidney*, do not surpass this beautiful picture.

But while it is easy to understand how Elizabeth Hamilton became “la belle Hamilton” at the Court of Charles II., and had more offers of marriage than the number of years she had lived, till, in the third year of the Restoration, she gave her hand to the celebrated wit and courtier, the Comte Philiberte de Grammont, most of us doubtless would find it difficult to discover that “fundamental charm” we hoped to find. I could believe all that her brother Anthony could tell of her beauty and winsomeness, and have no doubt that Count Philibert was a very lucky man ; but, for myself, I realised that even had I been a member of that wicked, laughing, delightful, reprehensible Carolan Court, and a favourite of fortune in the matter of advantages, I doubt if I would have been one of the five-and-twenty suitors of “la belle Hamilton ;” certainly, as things are, one might be Japhet in search of a wife and still not be allured, even in random fancy, by this particular Fair Woman.¹ Alas, there is yet another charm which allures men when Beauty is only an impossible star ; in the words of the anonymous poet of “Tibbie Fowler o’ the Glen,”

“ Gin a lass be e’er sae black,
An’ she hae the pennysiller,
Set her up on Tinto tap,
The win’ll blaw a man ‘till her.”

It was not the fair Elizabeth’s “pennysiller,” however, that was the attraction, though she did have what the Scots slyly call “advantages.”

Nevertheless, it is clear she must have in her beauty something that appeals to many minds and in different epochs. The fastidious nobles and wits of the Restoration admired her ; Sir Peter Lely expended his highest powers in painting her ; his portrait of her has long been the

¹ Marryat’s Japhet sought a father, but this is not a misapplication to boggle at !

gem of the famous series known as the “Windsor Beauties,” and at Hampton Court she is ever one of the most popular of the ladies of the Stuart régime.

Probably the Countess of Sunderland, of whom Van Dyck, it is thought, so much enjoyed the painting, must have been more winsome in looks, as she was certainly superior in graces of mind and spirit. This is the famous Lady Dorothy Sidney, daughter of the second Earl of Leicester and wife of that Lord Sunderland, the first of his title, who fell fighting under the Royalist flag at the Battle of Newbury; not to be remembered for this now, however, but as the “Sacharissa” of Edmund Waller’s love-poems. True, Waller, who was for generations one of the most popular, and for a few decades *the* most popular of all English poets, is now almost as little read as the least notable of his contemporaries. He aspired to be England’s Petrarch, and like Lovelace with one flawless lyric, or like Blanco White, or the French poet, Félix Arvers, with a single sonnet, is now among the immortals by virtue only of one little song. Possibly Laura had as good reason for discounting the passion of her Petrarco as Dorothy Sidney had for qualification of the prolonged homage of Waller. Both “My deathless Laura” and “My divine Sacharissa” married another person than the lover who gave immortality in verse; married, and had children, and occasionally perhaps glanced at the Sonnets to Laura, or the Poems addressed to Sacharissa. Not only, indeed, did Lady Dorothy choose Lord Sunderland in preference to Waller, but as a widow she even preferred the practical poetry of a Mr. Robert Smythe’s wooing to that which in her youth she had had so much experience of in verse. Fair and comely she seems in Van Dyck’s portrait of her, though not the Sacharissa of whom one had dreamed. Was it this attractive English lady who was the inspirer of “Go, lovely Rose”? The thought suggests what a strange revelation it would be if we were to be entertained with a series of authentic likenesses of all the beautiful women we have loved or dreamed of across the ages. “A Dream of Fair Women”; what would Helen say to it, or Cleopatra, or Guenevere, or, for that matter, Eve herself? What a desert of disillusion would exist between the catalogue-entry, “Helen, daughter of Leda queen to King Tyndarus, who became the wife of Menelaus, and subsequently went abroad with

Paris : commonly known as Helen of Troy," and the quoted motto-lines from Marlowe :—

“ Is this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burned the topless towers of Ilium ? ”

Again, fancy the astonishment and chagrin of Mr. Swinburne, if he passed one by one the actual counterparts of the ladies of the “ Masque of Queen Bersabe,” from Herodias to that Alaciel whose eyes “ were as a grey-green sea,” and found that he could not recognise one of those vignettes in red or white flame which he wrought so wondrously in the days of his youth ! Semiramis, in truth, may have been but a handsome woman with a temper, the Queen of Sheba nothing more than distinctly pretty, and Sappho passionate but plain.

But there is a difference between the praisers of Royal beauty and those who hymn ladies whom they can also approach when the lyre is laid aside. We believe in Laura and Sacharissa and Castara, and many other fair dames beloved of the sons of Apollo. If for nothing else than because she inspired the loveliest of all Waller’s songs, we would look with homage at this Fair Woman whom the genius of Vandyck has given us a glimpse of :—

“ Go, lovely Rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows
When I resemble her to thee
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

“ Tell her that’s young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

“ Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired ;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

“ Then die, that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee,
How small a part of time they share
Who are so wondrous sweet and fair.”

V

Having done with the fair Sunderland and her rival, La Belle Hamilton, I studied one by one the other pictures selected by my friends. Who could not admire the Zurbaran, masterly as a Velasquez? and Titian's *Catarina* is admitted by all to be worthy of her fame. The Luini, a fine example of mysterious haunting beauty of expression, will appeal to all who love the type of which the rarest presentment has been given to us by Leonardo. Of the more modern works, Romney's *Louisa Cathcart* is likely enough first to win the wandering fancy. Sweet she is, and gracious, and lovely in her young dignity of wifehood, this bonnie Lady Mansfield. But there is beauty, too, rare and convincing beauty, in Hoppner's *Miranda*. Who was "Miranda"? All that the catalogue tells is that she was the wife of Michael Angelo Taylor, M.P. Michael Angelo, it may be added, was a member of Boodle's. That alone meant social distinction. But he was also an intimate acquaintance of the Prince Regent. On a memorable night in 1811, on the occasion of the drafting out the reply to the Address of the Houses of Parliament, George P.R. was kindly put to bed by his solicitous companions, and Michael Angelo wrote out the Princely response, while Sheridan and William Adam "paced opposite sides of the room till each could find an opportunity of whispering to Michael that the other was the damnedest rogue existing." As for Mrs. Michael, she was *persona gratissima* at Carlton House, where the Prince, half drunk or half sober, radiated the Glory of the World. She might have been a sister of Mrs. Jane Middleton or of Nell Gwynne, rather than that Miranda whom Shakespere drew in rainbow-gold and touched with immortality. But even as an impossible Miranda she is well worthy the homage of admiration. As a painting, this is one of Hoppner's triumphs. Its beauty, its grace, its freedom, its charm, are unmistakable. Here, and in at least a score of other canvases on the line of his ablest achievement, he proves what a high place in English art is his due, a long deferred and even now not often frankly granted due.

There still remained the strange selections of Fair Women, on the part of my literary counsellor. One of these is certainly not without

attraction, and probably the lady whom Van Somer painted was more than merely comely. She has fine eyes, and there is a look upon her face as though the best light of beauty, that of happiness, was often seen there. A brave dame this Lady Derby was ; a “brick,” as my friend called her. She is sometimes spoken of as a type of the heroic woman, an aristocratic Grace Darling, an English Kate Barlas ;¹ but honour to whom honour is due, and so let it be remembered that the wife of the seventh Lord Derby, who was so famous for her heroic defence of Latham House against Fairfax and his Parliamentarians, was a Frenchwoman, Charlotte de la Tremouille by name. Neither disaster nor the death of her nearest and dearest quelled her indomitable spirit. She could not prevent the execution of her husband, but she could maintain his loyalty in death and his loyalty in life to the king. The Parliamentarian chiefs were anxious to make her a prisoner, either for exile or restraint ; but she was in her own lands, and no man durst betray her. In time she made good her escape to the Isle of Man ; and it must have been a consolation to her pride that she was the last person who submitted formally to the authority of the Parliament. It is pleasant to know that so staunch a Royalist not only escaped the enmity of her foes during the period of the Commonwealth, but lived to see the Restoration, and to have a message of gracious courtesy from the King, who had come “intill his ain” again.

But at the Queen Mary I admit I looked unmoved. It is not a genuine “Mary,” in the first place ; as to that there can hardly be any question. But over and above this, it is doubtful if there is a portrait of the Queen of Scots in existence which any Mariolater could have pleasure in looking at. There are certain women we never wish to see except in mental vision. Some readers may recollect that Sapphic fragment preserved by Hephaestion which tells us simply that “Mnasidica is more shapely than the tender Gyrinno.” Fortunate Mnasidica, who has haunted the minds of men ever since, not once enslaved by sculptor or painter of any period ! Beautiful Shapeliness, that none can gainsay ! Painters who give us Helens and Cleopatras and Queen Maries seem quite unaware of the

¹ Catherine Douglas, who, for her heroic attempt to save James I. of Scotland by barring the door of the royal chamber with her naked arm, received the sobriquet of “Kate Barlass.” This is the origin, it is said, of the Scottish surname “Barlas.” Kate Barlas is immortalised in literature in *The King’s Tragedy*.

heavy handicap they put upon their productions. And so it goes without saying that all portraits of Mary of Scotland are disappointing, from that of the earliest anonymous limner to that of Mr. Lavery. There is not one of us *blasé* enough to withstand the cruel disillusion of what, by way of adding insult to injury, is called an authentic likeness. Poor Mary ! She has paid bitterly in innumerable portraits for the wonderful rumour of her beauty in her own day. No man who respects himself should commit *lèse majesté* by staring and commenting upon this much pictorially misrepresented Queen. It does indeed make one glad that a few other young ladies famous for their beauty were spared the ignominy of pictorial immortality !

As for Lady Ellenborough, surely it must be admitted that even the art of Sir Thomas Lawrence does not bestow beauty upon her. Doubtless she had a smile that would unlock prison doors, eyes that would melt a Marat or a Danton, a mien and manner, an expression and charm, that made her irresistible to most men. But, on canvas, one can see no more than that she looks like a woman who had immense vitality. Otherwise, I sympathise with my friend. The lady's story is certainly a remarkable one. Miss Jane Elizabeth Digby must have been a vivacious damsel, even while still a school-girl and learning, in the manner of her time, to spell execrably. She was one of the fortunate women born with the invisible sceptre. If she had been an actress she would have been the empress of the stage : if she had been a demi-mondaine she would have been the Aspasia of her day : if she had been a queen, she would have been a Catherine of Russia. Again, she was one of those impetuous people who have no time to be virtuous. We know next to nothing of her girlhood, yet we may be sure that she set her nursemaid a bad example in flirtation, and shocked her governess, if she had one, by many abortive intrigues. No doubt her friends thought that she would settle down and be good when she became the wife of the Earl of Ellenborough. They argued that what a high-spirited Miss Digby would do, a proud-spirited Countess of Ellenborough would disdain. But Miss Jane Elizabeth had, she considered, come into the world to enjoy herself in her own way. Not long after her marriage she permitted the too marked attention of Prince Schwartzenberg, and this brought about a duel between that gentleman and Lord Ellenborough. Neither duellist was killed : and the

only result was that not long afterwards the lady made up her mind to go off with Prince Schwarzenberg. After a time Lord Ellenborough died, and then his widow married the Prime Minister of Bavaria. That a genuine passion for this strange woman animated the Bavarian noble is clear not only from his having offered marriage to a lady of such doubtful reputation, but from the tragic circumstance that, when she tired of him in turn, and set forth once more on her dauntless quest of man, he committed suicide. She had several episodes between this date and that when she found herself in Syria, and espoused to an Arab Sheik of Damascus. It would be incredible that she died in his arms in the desert, were it not for the additional fact that she was at that moment contemplating an elopement with her handsome dragoman. Miss Digby was, certainly, not one of those "beauties" towards whom—as Gautier advises a man, in a sentence already given here—one should go straight as a bullet. Instead of our seizing "her by the tip of her wing, politely but firmly like a gendarme," she would be much more likely to seize us. She was unreasonable, we will admit, but then, with Mme. de Girardin, she might exclaim "Be reasonable! which means: No longer hope to be happy." Obviously she was of those essentially feline women of whom Edgar de Meilhan speaks when he says that "tigers, whatever you may say, are bad companions." "With regard to tigers," he adds, "we tolerate only cats, and then they must have velvet paws." Neither Lord Ellenborough, nor the Bavarian Prime Minister, nor the Arab Sheik, nor any other of her special friends, would deny that a little more velvet on the paws of the sprightly Jane Elizabeth would have been an advantage.

There are always women of this kind, who exercise an imperious and inexplicable sway over the male imagination, or, to be more exact, over the imagination of certain males. It is no use to reason with the bondager. With the King in *Love's Labour's Lost* he can but reply

"Yet still she is the moon, and I the man.
The music plays"

We are fortunate, no doubt, who never hear this music, a bewildering strain from the heart of the Venusberg. Rather that "silver chiming," which is "the music of the bells of wedded love." Poets are terrible romanticists in the matter of the affections. They are the most faithful

of lovers to some fair impossible She: but they are apt to have wandering eyes in the ordinary way of life. Too many behave, even on the threshold of the Ideal, in the reprehensible manner of Samuel Pepys when that famous chronicler and incurable old pagan found himself in church one fine day. "Being wearied," he writes, "turned into St. Dunstan's Church, where I heard an able sermon of the minister of the place; and stood by a pretty modest maid, whom I did labour to take by the hand; but she would not, but got further and further from me; and, at last, I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me if I should touch her again—which, seeing, I did forbear, and was glad I did spy her design. And then I fell to gaze upon another pretty maid in a pew close to me, and she on me; and I did go about to take her by the hand, which she suffered a little and then withdrew. So the sermon ended." It is to be feared that Pepys had not realised the very common truth, which may be given in the guise of a remembered phrase from *Evan Harrington*,—"Both Ale and Eve seem to speak imperiously to the love of man. See that they be good, see that they come in season."

If all the Fair Women of Picture-World were to be brought together it would be made quite clear that the one thing that in a thousand instances escapes the painter is expression. Expression is the morning-glory of beauty. A few men in all ages have understood this, Leonardo and the great Italians preeminently. It is to the credit of many of the most eccentric "impressionists" that they have wearied of conventional similitude, and striven to give something of the real self of the person whose likeness is being transferred to canvas. These, with Bastien Lepage, have realised that "we must change our ways if any of our work is to live." "We must try," adds that notable artist of whom Mrs. Julia Cartwright has recently given us so excellent a biography, "We must try to see and reproduce that inmost radiance which lies at the heart of things, and is the only true beauty, because it is the life."

That inmost radiance! To discern it, to apprehend it, to reveal it to others, that is indeed the quintessential thing in all art.

But the spectator must not only make allowances for the painter of a portrait; he must himself exercise a certain effort. In a word, he must bring the glow of imagination into play, he must let his mental

atmosphere be nimble and keenly receptive. He must remember that while portraiture may have verisimilitude of a kind, it can very rarely simulate that loveliest thing in a woman's beauty—expression. He must discern in the canvas a light that is not there. He must see the colour come and go upon the face, must see the eyes darken or gleam, the lips move, the smile just about to come forth, and if possible the inner radiance that in many vivid and fine natures seems to dwell upon the forehead, though too fugitive ever to be caught, save as it were for a moment unawares.

PART II

“Ce fut un beau souper, ruisselant de surprises.”

—THÉODORE DE BANVILLE : *Odes Funambulesques*.

I

I do not know how it was, but after the clock had struck six at the Grafton Gallery on the day of the private view, I found myself there still, in deserted rooms. The last private-viewer had gone ; the directors and secretaries and assistants and collaborators had shaken hands and departed rejoicing ; even the hall porter, after having locked and bolted the front door, had disappeared.

I cannot say how long I brooded over this unexpected derangement of my plans, but presumably for some time ; for all at once I became aware that the rooms were dark, and that I was alone without any knowledge of where the electric light could be turned on, if electric light there were ; alone, without even a match.

The situation to some extent resembled that of Don Juan when he found himself in the Sultan’s harem at Stamboul. But then, though I too was surrounded by a superfluity of Fair Women, there was a marked distinction. Besides, even if the ladies were alive, or if any one could come to life at the touch of a mortal hand, it was profoundly dark, and I might touch the wrong person. On canvas I had much admired the technical presentment of certain dames with whom, however, it would be no pleasure to have a further acquaintanceship. Maria Voogt Claasdr, for example, or Cornelis Janssen’s fair Hollander.

I was uncertain even in what room I stood : but, strange to say, was conscious of the fact that the portraits had become actualised, were alive. Had I realised that I was in the Centre Room I might have found my way to a friendly picture with whom (it would be rude to say “which”) I might have had some interesting conversation. But I think I dreaded

Maria Voogt Claasdr, or Queen Elizabeth as "Diana," or even the fair but too impulsive Jane Elizabeth Digby.



Queen Elizabeth as Diana. By Vroom Cornelius.

All perplexity, however, was speedily solved. In a moment there was a brilliant illumination. Obviously this was no kindly consideration

on the part of the returned porter, for the glow was entirely diffused from the light in innumerable beautiful eyes, and from the gleam of jewels upon white arms and breasts. I saw then, to my bewilderment, that I was not in the Octagon Room, but in the Centre Gallery. It was with only vague curiosity, however, I noted the great enlargement of this room, both in width and length. All the *bric-à-brac* cases had been removed, and a small company of ladies was moving to and fro, chatting and laughing.

There was no mistaking H.M. the Queen, as Von Angeli had painted her. I made an obeisance, and again to the beautiful, wistful-eyed Princess Alix, but was less ready with a lady who at that moment stepped down from frame No. 103. As she seemed somewhat perturbed at my not at once bowing low before her, I looked to see who she was, and discovered her an early Richmond, and no other than the future Queen of England. "I had always thought the Princess beautiful as well as distinguished," I murmured to myself in excuse.

At first it looked as though all the ladies in the room had come down from their frames; but soon I saw this was not so, and that I was assisting at a gathering of modern paintings only. With a start of surprise I noticed there were a few gentlemen present, among whom were Sir Frederick Leighton and several of his *confrères*, including M. Boldini from Paris; though this was nothing compared with my astonishment when I became aware of the charming unconventionality that prevailed. Every lady appeared exactly as she was painted, and no one seemed astonished at any informality. In fact, there was no embarrassment even among the gentlemen, except in three instances. Mr. Calderon looked confused and very uneasy when Aphrodite advanced towards him laughingly, and begged him to run and fetch a towel, as she was still dripping from her delightful dip in the Ionian sea. Mr. Poynter distinctly flushed when, hearing some one calling to him, he glanced round, and perceived the pretty young girl, clothed only with a fan, whom he had painted as *High Noon*. She had perched herself on the top of a heavy frame, in lieu of the rocks whence she indolently crawled. As for the President, I noted that he avoided the corner where the lady of the Frigidarium stood calmly inspecting her reflection in the bath-water; indeed, he did not at any time seem anxious to meet even his beautiful



Princess Alix of Hesse. By F. A. Kaulbach.

Corinna of Tanagra. Probably they had had some slight disagreement in the studio concerning the length of her eyelashes or certain details of her dress.



H.R.H. The Princess of Wales. By W. B. Richmond, A.R.A.

However, I understood how one might prefer new acquaintances. There were several ladies whom I had met before, but towards whom my ardour had cooled. So far back as twelve years ago I remembered having

almost fallen in love with a Fair Woman introduced to public notice by Rossetti under the name of *Veronica Veronese*. Years had passed since I had looked into an art-record of which in my youth I had been guilty; but in a flash I recollect my crude rhapsodisings. There Veronica was, however, seated near her frame, and listening to her canary. How I remember that fowl! Did I not write of it, *more Scotice*, "The latter is a pure yellow canary"; and did not an amused critic demand what right I had to cast any imputation upon the morality of canaries in general by this obtrusive insistence on the purity of the Rossettian bird?

I looked at her, now, from a changed standpoint. There could be no question but that, for myself at least, I had overrated her artistic charm, though that she has charm as well as beauty is not to be gainsaid. Overcoming my shyness I went up to her. After a brief conversation wherein Veronica remarked that she feared there was only one critic left who would wax enthusiastic about her charms, and even his eloquence was no longer as burning as it was, notwithstanding unremitting practice in a leading periodical, I asked her who Girolama Ridolfi was, and where one could procure the *Lettres* whence came the extract which Rossetti had placed on the lower part of her frame.

For a moment she smiled, and the pure yellow canary stopped its incessant living-up to its designation of *l'oiseau inspirateur*.

"Girolama Ridolfi," she said, "was a young man who lived in the same haunted house as Chiaro dell' Erma, Chiaro of *Hand and Soul*, you remember? His *Lettres* would, I am afraid, be as difficult to find as that triptych in Dresden or that picture in the Pitti palace of which my father-in-art gave so fascinating an account."

I was the more interested in this confirmation of my suspicion, as that very day I had been snubbed by a fellow art-critic who, on my asking him as we stood before Veronica Veronese who Ridolfi was, had replied with mingled surprise at my ignorance and in easy surety of knowledge—"Oh, Ridolfi? Why the famous Girolama Ridolfi, of course, who wrote the *Lettres*, you know."¹

It was with pleasure I turned to the bright and winsome Lavinia,

¹ As I have seen the French quotation in question attributed seriously to "the mediæval writer Ridolfi," I may as well say definitely here that Rossetti himself told me he had written these imaginary words of the imaginary Ridolfi.



Veronica Veronese. By D. G. Rossetti.

who had strolled from beneath the warm lights and shadows of the tree where G. D. Leslie had seen and painted her. It may be a bourgeois taste, but I admit that I preferred this wholesome, sunny, sweet-natured young Englishwoman to her more æsthetic neighbour with the canary. Glancing back at the canvas itself, it seemed to me one of the best open-air pictures that Leslie ever painted, and to show the thorough skill and knowledge of that fine English artist whom it has long been the fashion to depreciate.¹ If Lavinia was as gentle in voice and manner as her smiles and expression would naturally indicate, there was a contrast at hand in the person of a very pretty but rather pettish girl who stood biting a long wisp of hair which she had snatched from her tangled wavy locks. I remembered a drawing by Mr. Frederick Sandys called *Proud Maisie*, and it was easy to recognise the original. I did not speak, however; and also passed, without more than a bow, a lady of great fame both in the Ancient and the Modern world. In truth I had at home a Shakesperian portrait of "Egypt" that was far preferable to the Hebraically handsome personage whom I overheard complaining to her beautiful and stately neighbour, Corinna of Tanagra, that she wished either Mr. Alma Tadema or Sir Henry Thompson would remove the offensive *Op. cxlv.*, which is painted on her canvas. "I am not a piece of music," added Cleopatra, "nor do I care to be labelled as though I were the hundred and forty-sixth work for sale."

It was a gratification to meet Corinna. In the first place, her beauty is remarkable, and of a rare type. Then rumour has declared for centuries that she was not less distinguished as a poetess than celebrated for her loveliness. Psappha the Lesbian, Erinna of Telos, Corinna of Tanagra ! Three songsweet names, with magic in them still. To meet the rival of Pindar was no small honour, but I admit that I would have rejoiced in her beauty had she been "nobody." The opportunity for settling one or two matters was too good to be lost. Hence, after a tribute of homage which it was impossible to resist paying, I asked her whether she really came from Tanagra, or from Thebes as some have asserted.

"There was no question of the kind in my day," she replied coldly.

¹ The reader interested in the subject will find the best account of Leslie and his art in the essay by Mr. P. G. Hamerton in *Thoughts about Art*.



Lavinia. By G. D. Leslie, R.A.

"Every one knew that Corinna was called Corinna of Tanagra. Possibly some too appreciative historian in Thebes has claimed me as a citizen?"

"Just so: as to this day enthusiasts dispute concerning the birth-place of Homer, the character and importance and number of writings of Sappho, and other matters of extreme interest to all lovers of ancient literature. You will forgive the adjective, Corinna, but you know that in our hurried age we apply the term 'ancient' somewhat loosely."

"Do not disturb yourself, I pray. From all I have seen and heard I have no wish to be other than antique. But now you must forgive me. I wish to speak to a lady who is also, I understand, a daughter of the Muses, or at any rate is one who has earned repute by her pen. Her father-in-art, M. Boldini, has just informed me that I must meet my only possible rival."

"Ah, you mean——"

"Yes, that lady in black. I thought at first she was Lamia. She has a serpentine grace that charms me when she moves to and fro, but I must say that when she sits in the manner in which M. Boldini has painted her I am perplexed. Women of old stood when they stood, and sat when they sat: but this Fair Woman—to use your phrase, though I note that her type of beauty is dark, as it was in my own time—seems, as she reclines, to dispose very uncomfortably of what I believe it is the vogue now to allude to as the lower limbs. Will you introduce me to her?"

"I will introduce her to you with pleasure, Corinna, if you will only be good enough to answer one or two little questions which I may not again have an opportunity to ask. Now, about Pindar—"

"Excuse me, we who are only visitors to the Old Country cannot discuss others who like ourselves are no longer residents here."

"Tell me, at least, whether Aelian is right in his statement that you won the bardic victory over Pindar no fewer than five times, or is Pausanias correct in his declaration that you contested only once with that famous Doric poet?"

Corinna looked at me somewhat disdainfully.

"I have heard about this Pausanias. He averred that I strove only once with my pupil Pindar, and that my victory was due to my beauty

which biassed the judges, and also to the fact that my lyric verse was chanted in the Æolic, and so was better understood of my auditory than Pindar with his unquestionably very beautiful Doric measures. Well let me assure you that Pausanias was wrong. I excelled by virtue of the merit of my verse. I would scorn to succeed because of the accident of good looks."

"That, Corinna, has been said by every beautiful woman who has come into the world——"

"You do not believe me?"

"Do not speak so coldly, beautiful Corinna. I ask you to turn and look at the canvas you have just left. Is not the phantom of you that Sir Frederick has fixed there enough to missuade the judgment of poor weak men? There are many fair women here at this moment, and some whose moral worth is superlative, yet what man could refuse to award to you the——"

"One moment. Would *you* give me the palm of beauty over, say, the serpentine lady, over your *fin-de-siècle* Lamia, of whom M. Boldini is the father-in-art?"

It was awkward, for at this moment M. Boldini and Lady Colin Campbell came close to us. There are times when the bravest of men is a coward. I am not the bravest of men, and I had not even a temptation to be honest at all cost. Like George Washington, I had no hesitation about a lie. It was not for nothing I had been in the habit of visiting the studios of popular painters. With ready tact I changed the subject.

"Ah, you must meet each other! The Antique and the Modern World! Serpentina, you must allow me to introduce you to the celebrated Corinna of Tanagra, the instructor and rival and master of Pindar, the author of five volumes of imperishable verse,¹ and the most beautiful woman of that wonderful fifth century before our Christian era. Corinna, permit me to——"

At that moment, unfortunately, M. Boldini seized me by the arm. When I released myself, the two fair women were already in animated conver-

¹ A polite fiction: the five volumes once existed, it is true, but were irretrievably lost, probably more than 2000 years ago. Only a few authentic fragments of the writings of this famous poetess have been preserved.

sation, the one tall and as dignified as the Venus of Milo, the other no longer with her garments so twisted about her as to suggest that she had girt herself for a dance, but now a fitting rival to her companion.

There was nothing for it but to resign myself to my new interlocutor.

“Heavens ! my friend,” he exclaimed, “what do these painters of yours, Rossetti, Watts, Burne Jones, mean ? They seem to me to paint portraits of portraits, not of living women. There is no inside. Each of these æsthetic and academical women I have seen here and at the Academy is as manufactured as dear old Villiers’ Hadaly. You remember her, the automatic heroine of *L’Ève Future*?¹ Look at this *Circe* of your Sir Edward. Has he ever seen sails at sea that he has painted them in this impossible fashion ?”

I was thankful that he spoke in a low voice; also that he did not understand English. For just behind us were Mr. Watts and the painter of *Circe*, and they were discussing the strange mental condition of those French impressionists who, because of a brilliant cleverness of a mechanical kind, believe that they and they alone possess the secret of true Art.

“They are the talented journalists of Art, not her poets, her sages,” said the one.

“They are Society-paper paragraphists who wish to be thought Thackeray,” remarked the other.

“Which is the truth, President ?” some one asked at that moment of the well-known personage who strolled by, with a nod for every one.

“The truth ? In Art all is truth that is truthful. This is a profound thought. At Burlington House there are many mansions. We have had deceased British artists who in the flesh would not speak to each other. Some winter—far off I hope—there will be a Watts Exhibition, also I need hardly say, a Burne-Jones Exhibition. Ah ! my dear Sir John we were just saying that the Millais Exhibition, which must one winter—far remote I trust—be the chief attraction at Burlington House—ah, you here, Monsieur Boldini ! This is an unexpected pleasure. But a second

¹ *L’Ève Future*, by Villiers de l’Isle Adam ; a remarkable romance based on the actual and imagined electrical inventions of Mr. Edison, with a beautiful automatic woman as heroine.

ago we were saying that the presence among us of men like yourself is not only most welcome but is an added stimulus to emulation — ”

At that moment the parroquet which was perching on the shoulder of a young lady who had passed from a frame labelled *Love Birds* flew to the



Sara Bernhardt.

graceful and lovely *Iris*, whom I remembered having met in Mr. Shannon's studio. The incident, trivial as it was, distracted my attention. Iris, I thought, looked tired and bored; in fact, she admitted, in a whisper, that this was the case.

“ Why should Mr. Shannon send me here? ” she added, “ though perhaps it is not his doing after all. He must know that some of my easel-sisters would care more for this kind of thing, and certainly be much

more appreciated. The Marchioness of Granby—of course you remember her at the Grosvenor some years ago—*she* ought to be here : and, by the way, you must look at her lovely little drawings”—

I am afraid I heard no more, if any more were said—which is unlikely, as Iris was already in a reverie, a dream as white and lovely as her own white and lovely self. For just then I was dazzled by the sheen and glitter of Miss Ellen Terry's gorgeous Lady Macbeth apparel. She came forward arm in arm with Mme. Sara Bernhardt, laughing consumedly, much more in the manner of Rosalind than of the grim spouse of the Thane of Cawdor.

“Oh, have you seen my father-in-art, Mr. Sargent? No? I do so want to get hold of him. He has always said that some dreadful malformation underlay that glove on Miss Grant's right arm and hand ; and now she is about to reveal the mystery ! You know Miss Grant, don't you ? You must have met her at Prof. Herkomer's? Well, she is tired to death, she says, of the critics who will draw attention to what she admits to be a shortcoming, but is nothing so very dreadful after all ; and now that Prof. Herkomer is busy at Bushey she is going to take the opportunity of settling the matter. Do you see that robust brunette? She is a Daughter of the Lagunes, whom Mr. Luke Fildes brought over with him from Venice. I admire the way in which these two Fair Women stick by each other. Each is such an admirable foil to the other. Ah, there is Veronica Veronese's canary ! Catch it ! catch it !”

But at this the spell came to an end. The lovely glow waned ; the figures became confused ; there was even, it appeared to me, an unseemly scramble in front of a score or so of frames. The swish of a long serpentine black dress came right across my eyes, as I staggered against the dissolving shadow of M. Boldini. Then all was darkness, and I knew no more.

II

When I opened my eyes again I had no idea where I was. What an absurd dream, was my first thought, on recollecting all that has just been described. The dream, however, was soon forgotten in the bewilderment of a more immediate problem.

No one who has slept in the uncomfortable grandeur of an Italian palace will fail to understand me when I say that I felt convinced I had awaked in Italy. Any one who has slept in a palace of this kind, and opened his eyes for the first time to a Venetian morning, will understand me when I say I knew at once that I was in Venice.

That rippling sound, more like the stealthy feel of a sleeper's slow-moving hand than the motion of water, was unmistakable ; or, if there were room for doubt, there could be no mistake when *Stalì !* and *Premè !* those familiar gondolier-cries, were heard.

Then it was as though dark veils were suddenly withdrawn. The inrush of sudden sunlight would no doubt have dazzled me, but, as it happened, I was not in Venice after all ; and the forenoon light of London, however much it may cheer gas companies and electricians, could never be alluded to as bewildering.

And yet, where was I ? At the time, certainly, I believed myself to be in that loveliest of all cities of the world. Though the apartment before me was a glorified duplicate of the octagon room at the Grafton Gallery, the palace that contained the room was in Venice, and among the company I could see many beautiful women of the great days of Italy, and with them famous painters whom it was easy to recognise as Titian, Paris Bordone, Giovanni Pordenone, Jacopo Palma, Il Bacchiacca, Bernardino Luini, Sandro Botticelli, and others of Venice, Milan, Florence, and elsewhere.

By far the most beautiful woman in the room came slowly forward. I saw that she glanced at every man with a curious, wistful gaze. Surely. I thought, such beauty should be recognisable ; but I could not recall the features, though they were unmistakably of the finest Venetian type, Certainly, she had no counterpart among the portraits on the walls.

But before she reached me she turned aside to return the greetings of Titian and his friend Sansovino, "the courteous and gentle." Instead, there came forward a handsome man and woman, whom I recognised from a set of portraits of Italian celebrities of the sixteenth century which I possess. They were Varchi, the Florentine poet and an exile, and Lucrezia Gonzaga, the illustrious pupil of Bandella and Pico della Mirandola. With great courtesy, both, seeing that I was a stranger, stopped and spoke to me. They moved on as the beautiful woman

approached, but not until Lucrezia had whispered that the fairest of fair women was Gaspara Stampa.

As she came near I bowed reverently.

"You cannot know me, sir," she said, in a voice of great beauty and sweetness, "and yet I seem to see recognition in your eyes."

"I have read the sonnets of the Italian Sappho ; and whenever I think of Vittoria Colonna or Veronica Gambara, I remember the greatest of the three women poets of Italy, Gaspara Stampa."

"Sir, I thank you for your courtesy. But can it be that at this remote date you know the story of the most unhappy woman of her time ?"

"The Lady Gaspara Stampa would not wish me to say anything against the Lord of Collalto ; otherwise I should speak bitterly of one who caused such sorrow to the beautiful *Anasilla*."

"Ah, by your mention of that love-name, I see you do indeed know. It would be a pleasure to me to hear many things from you, and to exchange similar courtesies on my part, but unfortunately I must go hence immediately. I am here only for one end. I wish to see face to face that famous—or infamous—woman who—but no, let me use no hard names : are not all we women dry wood before the flame ?—that famous lady of France, Diane de Poitiers, who seduced my fair love from me. If you can direct me towards her, I am yours in a true debt. I could not ask Titian or Sansovino or the Lady Lucrezia Gambara, or still less Aretino ; not even my dear friends Cornelia or Violetta :¹ for one and all know my story, and are of my own time."²

I scarce knew what to do. The lady for whom Gaspara Stampa had inquired was present. Unfortunately she was to be seen just as she is in her picture by a French painter who may, but more likely may not have been François Clouet (Janet). Visitors to the Grafton Gallery will remember the strange portrait of Diane de Poitiers on the right side of the Octagon Room. The celebrated favourite of François I. and Henri II. is there represented in a half-covered bath, eating fruit, and looking vaguely about her, while other members of a very Flemish household conduct themselves indifferently. Diane here is certainly beautiful in her kind, but how poor a creature she seemed, to have won the love of a

¹ Cornelia, sister of Titian ; Violetta, daughter of Jacopo Palma.

² This story has been admirably told by the American painter, Mr. Eugene Benson, to whose little book I acknowledge my indebtedness.

Venetian noble of the rarest distinction who had loved and been loved by the most beautiful and brilliant woman of the age.

However, there was nothing for it but to be frank.

"There, madam, is Diane, Duchesse de Valentinois—there, near that corridor. You will observe that she has not yet finished her toilette."

For more than a minute Gaspara Stampa looked steadily at Diane de Poitiers. Then she turned, and her beautiful eyes were like the yellow flames of a black panther.

"I have forgiven the Lord of Collalto for what no man should be forgiven ; but now I can no longer bear him in reverence. If the woman had been more beautiful than I, I would have been content : but she is not even sweet and fair—not decent even. Surely she might have been content with the folly of two kings without dragging down the fair ideal and fair manhood of the noblest of Venetians ?"

I could not bear to witness the pain of the beautiful speaker. Yet, glancing again at Diane de Poitiers, my indignation rose and I could look at her no more. When I turned, Gaspara Stampa had vanished.

"*Ah, la bell' Saffo de' nostri tempi alta Gaspara !*" This, sighed rather than spoken, attracted my attention to a person who stood beside me.

"I am the Venetian poet, Parabosco, the organist of San Marco," he resumed, without further preamble. "Perhaps you have read what I wrote of the lovely Gaspara, of her surpassing beauty, her surpassing sweetness and nobility, her surpassing genius ? I would you and all who admire her could hear the funeral chant of six voices which I composed, and caused to be rendered publicly, on the occasion of her death—death not from her own hand, as commonly said, but from the extremity of thwarted love, of unrequited passion. This *Requiem* is still preserved, I may add, in the Library of San Marco."

"When next I go to Venice, Signor Parabosco, I will have it sought out and copied."

"*Grazie !* And now, can I be of any service to you before I leave ? Our présent span of life goes by minutes, you must know."

"Tell me, then, who are some of those Fair Women whom we see around us."

"That lady who passed just now is, I should say was, very famous in the middle of the sixteenth century. You would not know her name, however, as Il Bacchiacca did not paint it on the back of his canvas,

and as, I have reason to know, she has had no other chronicler. She was famous only for her beauty, and for the mystery attending her. Francisco Ubertini himself knew nothing of her, when one day she appeared in his house, and asked him to paint her. At that time Il Bacchiacca was young and unknown, and he welcomed the opportunity. When he had painted the portrait, that which you now see before you, he asked the lady in what way he could show his gratitude. ‘By bequeathing the picture to the City of Florence.’ ‘To what end?’ he inquired. ‘Because I wish to be remembered by the males of my time, and of all time to come,’ was the strange answer.¹ The rumour of her beauty spread abroad : many strange things were told of her : and about her scores of *novelle* were written. But to this day, no one knows anything authentic of her.”

“And these two beautiful women who are walking together?”

“The one nearer to us is Violetta Palma. Do you admire her? In my youth she was looked upon as a beautiful woman of the true Venetian type, though many of my fellow-citizens preferred the still more sensuous beauty of her present companion, who was, well, not her mother, but the informal wife of her father, Jacopo Palma.”

As a matter of fact I had already recognised the two Fair Women painted by Paris Bordone and Palma Vecchio ; but only to exchange the admiration I felt for them for a greater admiration of two ladies near them, *grandes dames* beyond question. A glance at the pictures on the wall told me who they were : the younger, that Isabella d’Este whom Pordenone (and not Giorgione) painted, the Lady Gonzaga herself, of whom many have forgotten that she was daughter to Ercolo, Duke of Ferrara and Modena, and wife of Francesco Gonzaga, last Lord of Mantua, but none that she was a poet and scholar worthy to be named after that Marchese di Pescara whom Michael Angelo loved, or that Gaspara whom all honoured as a new Sappho : the elder, the superb Lucrezia Borgia, by whom Lorenzo Lotto won so much fame. This great lady still carried in her hand the drawing wherin is foreoutlined her own death at her own hand. She was the most impressive woman among all three, of a stern but potent beauty.

“For myself,” broke in Messer Parabosco, “I prefer the less

¹ This is an authentic anecdote, but for Il Bacchiacca substitute the name of Félicien Rops, the living Belgian painter and etcher.

magnificent but more mysterious and seductive Milanese lady yonder, whom Luini painted a short time before she poisoned her lover for becoming over-bold in her presence, and thereafter poisoned her husband because he laughed at his rival's ignominious death. The beautiful Milanese is of the type of women who are not content with winning the bodies of men, but must enslave their very souls also. Ah, Luini and the Milan painters knew what beauty was!"

"That is strange from a Venetian! But doubtless you were a scholar, Signor Parabosco, and so loved only what was remote. Ah! forgive that past tense: it was a slip of the tongue! Yet surely the very type you admire is not, at its highest, Milanese, but Florentine? The very quintessence, the crown, the aloe-bloom of this kind of art, is it not Leonardo's *Monna Lisa del Giocondo*? Why, in your own Accademia delle belle Arti in Venice there is a drawing by Leonardo, a beautiful girl with sidelong rippling hair, delicately crowned with vine-leaves, with that enigmatical smile on her face and still more enigmatical smile in her eyes, which is finer than this Milanese beauty! It is a type that does not appeal to many men, but where its appeal is felt at all it is irresistible. There is all the seduction of nameless peril in these mysterious faces, which apparently tell nothing, and yet are so full of subtle meaning and repressed intensity."¹

"True. But I am myself foolishly prejudiced against everything Florentine. As for the early Florentine ideal of female beauty, it seems to me grotesque. Look at that lady there, famous in her own day for her looks and celebrated for ever by Angelo Politian and Pulci and other Florentine poets. Yes, she is '*la bella Simonetta*,' as you say. There is no fictitious flattery here. Giuliano de' Medici was not the man to make her his mistress unless she were considered pre-eminently beautiful. Have you seen her before, may I ask?"

"I think so. Did not Piero di Cosimo paint her? Among the pictures belonging to a great French lord, the Duc d'Aumale, at Chantilly, there is a *Cleopatra* which is supposed to be this very Simonetta."

"Do you admire her greatly?"

¹ Very remarkable, also, for this mysterious charm is the famous *Wax Bust of a Girl* in the Lille Museum, till recently always spoken of as by Raphael, but now recognised as a Florentine work of the fifteenth century. An extraordinarily skilful reproduction of it on canvas by Mr. Sargent is now at the Grafton Gallery (May—July). 1894.



Bernardino Luini. Pinx.

Walter L. Colly. Ph. Sc.

Portrait of a Lady.

"Frankly, no. But see, who is that strange man to whom she is speaking, and why does he turn away from her and every one else with so weary and distraught a look? Can that be Piero?"

"No; it is Alessandro Filipepi, who painted her—the great artist whom doubtless you know better as Sandro Botticelli. You may not be aware that the divine Sandro became melancholy in his latter years, and would have nothing to do with Art, or Fair Women, or any of the shows and vanities of the world. *La bella Simonetta* can only remind him of a past he would fain forget. But see! Here is a letter. I may as well give it to you, so that it may be made known to men at last."

As Parabosco spoke, he drew from his pocket an antique leathern case o'rfretted with thin silver traceries, and extracted from it a yellow sheet of paper, worn to the extreme of thinness. It was like the last leaf of a poplar against the last sunset of autumn.

"What is this that you entrust to me?" I asked eagerly.

"It is a letter that was written by the Florentine painter, Cosimo Rosselli. Its companion has been lost to eternal fame because of a moth. But this which I give you has been seen of no man since myself, not even by that Vasari of whom we have heard so much. At Botticelli's death, in 1510, it came into the possession of Aretino, and was by him given to me in exchange for a little ivory group of Leda and the Swan. It is addressed to Cosimo's pupil and disciple (and, in time, surpassing master) Piero. It will reveal to you something of that sadness which came upon the great Botticelli."

"He would be sadder still, my friend," I could not help saying, "if he knew how many fifth-rate pictures were now attributed to him, and how many pseudo-aesthetic puerilities have been solemnly uttered over his (or most often some one else's) work."

But I had cause to lament my malappropriate remark as soon as it was made. With a look of anger and astonishment Parabosco faded. To my great joy the letter was not in his hand, and so did not fade also. I regret that I have no longer the original; it was too transparent, and the chemic action of the light caused it to crumble into dust. But I remembered it word for word; and have elsewhere given a literal translation.¹

¹ Vide *The Scottish Art Review* for January and March 1890. ("The Lost Journal of Piero di Cosimo.") Let me take this late opportunity of thanking the conscientious London critic who adjudged my "translation" as inadequate and poor, he having *compared it throughout with the original!* Thus doth the Lord sometimes deliver one's enemies into one's hand!

At this moment I was about to make my obeisance to a stately coif'd dame who passed by—the Queen of Cyprus, that Catarina Cornaro whom



Portrait of a Lady. By Piero della Francesca.

Titian has represented with art so consummate; but even as I looked
my eyes grew dim.

In a confused array, no longer Venetian or even Italian, I saw all that company disappear ; an emaciated Fair Woman, who is said to have



The Countess of Suffolk. By Daniel Mytens.

inspired the famous Ferrara painter, Piero della Francesca ; Saskia, the comely wife of Rembrandt ; the Countess of Pembroke, whom

Gheeraedts painted, known to fame as "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother," from her zealous care for the *Arcadia* after her brother's death; that other great lady, the Countess of Suffolk, so ably painted by D. Mytens; a repentant Magdalen, who to my astonishment passed as the Lady Jane Grey, and as the daughter-in-art of Lucas de Heere—two strange mistakes, surely!—and others whom I need not mention or have already spoken of. The two latest, whom I saw just before all became obscure, were not the least noteworthy. One was the noble and splendid lady, whom Sir Antonio rejoiced to paint with all his skill, that Elizabeth de Valois daughter of Henri II. of France, and wife of Philip II. of Spain, who is memorable to us rather as the heroine of Schiller's master-tragedy, *Don Carlos*. The other was that heroic but, alas! somewhat malodorous princess, Isabella the Infanta, who, on her marriage with the Archduke of Austria, received the sovereignty of the Netherlands as a dowry; the same who, at the beginning of the famous siege of Ostend in 1601, vowed that she would not change her linen until the town was taken. Unfortunately, Ostend did not succumb till three years had elapsed! This is the origin of the colour known as *Couleur Isabelle*; so peculiarly had time and its allies dealt with the once snowy hue of the Archduchess's linen.

Perhaps it was the approach of this brave but too conscientious Archduchess—or "the rush of my emotions," as the novelists say—but at that moment I swooned.

III

When I came to, I was agreeably surprised to find my head in the lap of an unmistakable Fair Woman.

Before I had time to move I heard twelve strike, and by the broad daylight knew that it was noon.

Beside me was some one or something causing unnecessary pain to the calf of my leg. I half rose, and looked behind me. Imagine my astonishment to see a Cupid, perhaps Cupidon himself, standing close by, clearly sulking, and at intervals jagging at my leg with an unpleasantly sharp arrow. I was about to remonstrate, when an abrupt hiss to my right made me start. I caught a glimpse of a snake, and the next moment was on my feet.

"Madam," I exclaimed in considerable perturbation, "are you aware that there is a viper beside you?"



George Romney Pinx

Walter L. Gillett Ph. Sc.

Lady Hamilton as Ariadne

"Ah, I thought you were only a belated critic," replied the Fair Woman with an amused smile.

"Pray do not joke. It is too serious. Look, don't you see it? The Snake in the Grass!"

"Oh, is that all, sir? If you knew Sir Joshua he would tell you that it is only dangerous to those who fear it, or who have listened to its hissing till it sounds like a pleasing music. Alas! many poor women have listened overlong. Even now, I admit, as you were lying helpless with your head on my lap, I was so preoccupied that I heard neither the sweet seduction of the adder's changed voicing, nor the stealthy approach of that rascally little Cupid there who tried to wrest away—"

"Ah!"

The exclamation was wrung from me by a sudden pain. Cupid had taken the opportunity to shoot an arrow at me. If it had not reached my heart, it at least got near enough to make that virginal possession beat faster.

A beautiful smile came into my late ministrant's face. Her eyes were lamps of home.

In another moment I should have been lost. I stooped and took Cupid by the shoulders, and flung him into a little pool close by; then, with a sudden gesture caught the snake by the tail, twirled him round and round, and sent him spinning into the obscure Reynoldsian background.

As an art-critic with a pot to keep boiling, I had no other course open to me. Fancy the damage to an art-critic's chances in life if the rumour got about that he had surreptitiously gone away with the lady whom Sir Joshua painted in his picture called *The Snake in the Grass!* It would be the Duchess of Devonshire scandal over again!

"Deliver us from evil," said a sweet, clear voice beyond me. I looked, and saw a demure but winsome lady in a nun's garb.

"Who is that sweet saint?" I whispered to my companion.

"That—eh, ah, did you say *saint*? That is Lady Hamilton. She was, I understand, a nursery-maid at Hawarden. She had a *friend*, the Hon. Charles Greville, whom she rewarded by marrying his uncle Sir William Hamilton, the Ambassador at Naples. There, as you have doubtless heard, she transferred her affections to your great hero, Nelson."



Mademoiselle Hillsberg. By John Hoppner, R.A.

I looked as reprovingly as was possible at so sweet a face, but with a laugh Miss Emma Lyon sprang to her feet, and before I could beg her to be careful had sprung into an adjacent canvas, and the next moment was posing as the deserted Ariadne.

I was eager to join her, but just then Mr. Hoppner strolled up and begged me to give him my opinion of the beauty as well as of the dancing of a tall and handsome young woman whom I saw on the dais. "It is Mdlle. Hillsberg," he whispered, "and I may say that my portrait of her is, in my own opinion, the best thing I ever did."

"Yes, indeed, more truly than most here, she was a Fair Woman."

I think Mr. Hoppner was a little absent-minded as well as slightly deaf, for he reiterated (with a slight but material difference):—

"Yes, yes, to be sure, like most here, she was a Frail Woman."

IV

I have not time to tell all I saw and learned under the guidance of Mr. Hoppner. He introduced me to several beautiful or comely women who had sat to him for their portraits, and also to ladies who had in the same way favoured Sir Joshua and Thomas Gainsborough, Romney and Sir Thomas Lawrence, Raeburn and Sir William Beechey.

I cared most for dark-eyed and winsome Lady Kenyon and those ladies whom I met in company with Mr. Hoppner and Mr. Romney, though I was agreeably surprised with Sir William's daughter-in-art, Evelina, and more than ordinarily glad to see again, with Sir Joshua, the Duchess of Rutland, who in the early decades of our century was the reigning beauty; Mrs. Siddons, as the "Tragic Muse"; and the fair but frail Mrs. Mary Robinson, as "Perdita". Not less delighted was I to meet, with Sir Thomas Lawrence, the famous comic actress Eliza Farren, Countess of Derby, as good as she was beautiful; and with Mr. Gainsborough, Mrs. Fitzherbert, the morganatic wife of George, Prince of Wales; the famous actress, Dorothy Bland (Mrs. Jordan); and Mrs. Sheridan.

To my surprise I overheard some persons praising that Duchess of Devonshire whom Angelica Kauffmann painted. Possibly she was



Laay Kenyon. By John Hoppner, R.A

beautiful at the date when Gibbon the historian, who was enamoured of her, said that "if she chose to beckon the Lord Chancellor from his woolsack, he could not resist obedience"; but now I, for one, looked at her without the least wish to look again.

Incidentally, I may add that I noticed with pleasure a few children, none more winsome than the dainty little maid whom Reynolds has immortalised as "Collina," none more quaint than the "auld-farrant wean," whom Drouais painted blowing soap-bubbles. What a delightful Exhibition that would be which would consist entirely of children. We all hear the innumerable murmur of little feet. Not one of us but would rejoice in a Fair Children show.

But now let me be frank. Out of all these Fair Women was there one who embodied my ideal of womanly beauty? This is a question that every one would have to put to himself with the same apparent arrogance, as if any one individual's opinion had the least value for others, or had anything to do with the Beauty of Woman.

No. Though I saw a few beautiful, and many lovely, and scores of comely and handsome women, in no instance did I encounter one of whom in any conceivable circumstances I could say "*There: she is my Eve, past, present, and for ever!*"

"I am always waiting," wrote Amiel, "for the woman and the work which shall be capable of taking entire possession of my soul, and of becoming my end and aim." Yes, with Stendhal, we all wait: and one man in a million is rewarded with "the woman", to one man in a generation comes "the work."

What is wanting? must the glow of personal romance be present before a beautiful woman can embody for us the Beauty of Woman?

"Araminta's grand and shrill,
Delia's passionate and frail,
Doris drives an earnest quill,
Athanasia takes the veil;
Wiser Phyllis o'er her pail,
At the heart of all romance
Reading, sings to Strephon's flail,
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance'."

Cannot Araminta and Delia be beautiful, though Strephon may prefer Phyllis? Or is beauty in women as incalculable a quantity as the delight

men take in women's names? There are names that stir one like a trumpet, or like the sound of the sea, or like the ripple of leaves : names



Girl Blowing Bubbles. By J. G. Drouais.

that have the magic of moonlight in them, that are sirens whose witchery can in a moment enslave us. What good to give this or that sweet name : each man has in him his own necromancy wherewith to conjure up

vague but haunting-sweet visions. Equally, if all Fair Women of the Imagination or of Life have names we love, there are designations that seem like sacrilege, that grate, that excruciate. There is a deep truth in Balzac's insistence on the correspondence between character and nomenclature. Still, there are many debateable names. "Anna," for example, is not offensive, yet I "cannot away with it," though tolerant of "Annie." But hear what Mr. Henley has to say :—

"Brown is for Lalage, Jones for Lelia,
Robinson's bosom for Beatrice glows,
Smith is a Hamlet before Ophelia.
The glamour stays if the reason goes:
Every lover the years disclose
Is of a beautiful name made free.
One befriends, and all others are foes:
Anna's the name of names for me.

* * * *

"Fie upon Caroline, Jane, Amelia—
These I reckon the essence of prose!—
Mystical Magdalen, cold Cornelia,
Adelaide's attitudes, Mopsa's mowes,
Maud's magnificence, Totty's toes,
Poll and Bet with their twang of the sea,
Nell's impertinence, Pamela's woes!
Anna's the name of names for me!"

But to return : everywhere Ideala evaded me. It was a vain quest, though again and again I caught just a glimpse of her, a vanishing gleam, a fugitive glance. Once I was startled by the sudden light in the face of "Miranda," though when I looked again I was no more than haunted by an impalpable suggestion. In the beauty of the flowing drapery, in the breath of that sea frothing at her feet, somewhere there was an evanescent grace that belonged to Ideala. Yet it was not quite hers after all, any more than the indwelling beauty, seen perhaps only for a moment, in the eyes, or revealed in a momentary light upon the face, was hers—the beauty, the momentary light in *Miranda*, in the gipsy-beauty of her of the *Snake in the Grass*, in one or two other portraits of a more delicately refined loveliness, or of the higher beauty, that of the beautiful mind visible through the fair mask of the flesh. Long ago, says Thoreau in

Walden, "I lost a hound, a bay-horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail." I think She whom we seek rides afar on that fleet-horse, espied for ever by that flying dove, for ever pursued by that tireless hound.

No doubt it was absurd to expect to find Ideala even among portraits of women who may have been her kindred in the eyes of one or two persons who could discern not only the outward beauty, but the inner radiance. Moreover, the company was not exactly that amid which one would pursue one's quest. Diane de Poitiers, Nell Gwynne, Mrs. Jane Middleton, the Countess of Grammont, the Comtesse de Parabère, "Perdita," Lady Hamilton, Mlle. Hillsberg, Lady Ellenborough, Mrs. Grace Dalrymple Elliot, and Elizabeth Foster, Duchess of Devonshire, were one and all charming as well as beautiful women. But presumably Charles did not discern his soul's counterpart in Nell Gwynne, nor the Regent Philippe in "la belle Parabère," nor the amorous George in "Perdita," nor either Prince Schwartzenberg or the Arab Sheik in Lady Ellenborough.

In order to judge, one must know. We, who do not know these Fair Women of the past, cannot judge. We must each seek an Ideala of our own. After all, as some one has said, women are like melons : it is only after having tasted them that we know whether they are good or not.

We must be content with some one short of Perfecta. Unequal unions are deplorable. Moreover, it is very unsatisfactory to emulate the example of the celebrated Parisian *bouquineur*, who worried through life without a copy of Virgil, because he could not succeed in finding the ideal Virgil of his dreams. Ideala is as the wind that cometh and goeth where it listeth. Rather, she may be likened to the Wind for ever fleeting along "that nameless but always discoverable road which leads the wayfarer to the forest of beautiful dreams."¹

Moreover, She may appear anywhere, at any time. Remember Campion's "She's not to one form tied." Possibly, even, she may be called Nell Gwynne ; for to every Nell there will be a lover to whom she will be Helen.

¹ *Vide* Mrs. Wingate Rinder's Introduction to her recently published delightful anthology of *Poems of Nature*.



Nell Gwynne. By Sir Peter Lely.

“ Helen, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Niccan barks of yore,
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
 The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
 To his own native shore.

“ Lo ! in yon brilliant window niche,
 How statue-like I see thee stand,
 The agate lamp within thy hand !
 Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
 Are Holy Land ! ”

It is a pity that where a Helen is so evident to one passionate pilgrim, she should merely be Nell to the world in general. But so it is ; and, alas ! the very last person to perceive the connection with Psyche is often Nell herself. Poets get little gratitude, as a rule, for the glorification they effect. Poor bards ! they are apt to address as Ideala those who would rather be called Nell, and dedicate their deepest life-music to a mistress who, while flattered, really understands neither the poetry nor the poet, and can be more eloquent over a gift of gloves than over a work of genius. Thus hath it ever been ; doubtless thus it shall continue. As long as there are fair women, there will be strong men ready to lose their highest heritage for a mess of pottage. As among the innumerable kinds of flowers where the bee may roam and gather honey there is that flower of Trebizond whose fatal blooms allure the unwitting insect to madness or death, so among women there are some who irresponsibly lure men to sure calamity. Who was the man who said that fair women are fair demons who make us enter hell through the door of paradise ? Doubtless *he* loved a flower of Trebizond. Idealists, ponder !

Nevertheless, though we would not naturally seek Ideala among the Nell Gwynnes, it would be a mistake to rise to the high remote air where dwell the saints who have not yet transcended mortality. A touch of sin must be in that man whom we hail as brother, that woman we greet as sister. There was shrewd worldly wisdom in the remark of a French prince, that, however virtuous a woman may be, a compliment on her virtue is what gives her the least pleasure. Concurrently we may take that instructive passage in Cunningham's *British Painters* where we learn how Hoppner complained of the painted ladies of Sir Thomas

Lawrence that they showed “a gaudy dissoluteness of taste, and sometimes trespassed on moral as well as professional chastity,” while by implication he claimed for his own portraits purity of look as well as purity of style: with this result—“Nor is it the least curious part of this story, that the ladies, from the moment of the sarcasm of Hoppner, instead of crowding to the easel of him who dealt in the loveliness of virtue, showed a growing preference for the rival who ‘trespassed on moral as well as on professional chastity.’”

Women should not be wroth with men because that each male, sound of heart and brain, is a Ponce da Leon. Parenthetically, let me add—on the authority of Arsène Houssaye!—that all the energies of Creation do not succeed in producing throughout the whole world one hundred *grandes dames* yearly. And how many of these die as little girls—how few attain to “la beauté souveraine du corps et de l’âme”? “Voilà,” he adds—“voilà pourquoi la grande dame est une oiseau rare. Où est le merle blanc?” “The Quest of the White Blackbird”: fair women, ponder this significant phrase. We all seek the Fountain of Youth, the Golden Isles, Avalon, Woman (as distinct from the fairest of women), Ideala, or whatever sunbright word or words we cap our quest with. If wives could but know it, they have more cause to be jealous of women who have never lived than of any rival “young i’ the white and red.” Yet, paradoxically, with a true man, a wife, if she be a true woman, need never turn her back upon the impalpable Dream; for, after all, it is her counterpart, a rainbow-phantom.

Fair Women, *all* men are not travailing with love of you! There are Galileos who would say *e pur se muove*, though Woman suddenly became *passée*, nay, though she became a by no means indispensable adjunct. It is even possible there are base ones among us who may envy the Australian god Pundjel, who has a wife whom he may not see!

Alas, Fair Women only laugh when they behold Man going solitary to the tune of

“O! were there an island,
Though ever so wild,
Where women might smile, and
No man be beguiled!”

PART III

“And I said, ‘By the love I bear you, visions of beauty, come before me and play me magnificent shows.’”—LEIGH HUNT, *A Sight of the Gods*.

“Not these alone : but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, designed.”—TENNYSON.

I

IT will be news to most people, as it was to the present writer, that there was a Fair Woman exhibition other than that at the Grafton. In fact, the one I allude to is not of a season, but perennial.

It is called the Kennaquhair Gallery.

Presumably there is a byway into it from the Grafton : at any rate, I found myself there one day when I had traversed the several rooms and was by the farther wall of the End Gallery. I had been looking at Van Dyck’s *Venetia*, wife of the celebrated Sir Kenelm Digby, concerning whose beauty and attainments rumour was so busy, and about whose complaisance gossip was so rife : and was vaguely wondering if it was true that her husband had killed her by giving her viper-wine to preserve that beauty of which he was so proud : when I stepped suddenly into a passage I had never descried before. There was a moment’s darkness, then the gleam of the golden letters inscribed above a portal of sunlit marble : “The Kennaquhair Gallery.” In less than a minute I paid my price of rainbow-gold, and stood within.

My first glance bewildered me.

Before me was an immense gallery, on both walls of which hung, in a single line, and with a wide space between each canvas, an innumerable series of pictures.

The glow, the colour, the lovely radiance, the immediate sense of an indefinable air of beauty and ideal grace—all this, with something of

haunting reminiscence, with something of dreams realised, is indescribable.

My bewilderment became greater on the discovery that as soon as one stood opposite any canvas it was absolutely vacant !

No, I was not dreaming ! There was the room, there were other visitors moving to and fro, there were the pictures, there was the glow, the radiance.

It was only then I noticed a catalogue in my hand. I did not remember having taken or been given one. With eager curiosity I looked at it, and then turned to its preface. Externally the legend ran thus :—

THE KENNAQUHAIR GALLERY OF FAIR WOMEN (ENGLISH SECTION).

*Chaucer to Swinburne
and the Later Victorians.*

On the first page was the following note, prefatory to a brief introduction by a Mr. Dreemer, with whose name I was not familiar :—

* Visitors to the Kennaquhair Gallery must bear in mind (1) that the artist is never to be held responsible for the aspect of his picture in the eyes of the person who realises it; (2) that in almost every instance the painter's own vision will transcend that of the person to whom he appeals; (3) that frequently the lines of Depicture cannot be realised fully without previous knowledge of their context; (4) though the hues in which these Word-Pictures are painted are immortal, they are apt to be fugitive at times, at times somewhat dulled, at times radiant to the exclusion of everything else; but in each case, the reality or vagueness of the vision will depend upon the visitor himself; (5) no pictures are for sale, though replicas of one or many can be carried away in the mind without charge or interference on the part of the Directors, who, however, have nothing to do with the liability of these replicas to fade; (6) the Kennaquhair Gallery is open to all, without any distinction, and at all hours of the day or night, Sundays included; (7) entrance granted immediately on presentation of a piece of rainbow-gold, which can be had in any quantity on application at the House Beautiful. N.B. For the sake of the common weal, those who have not even a patch of the Ideal Life wherewith to hide the barrenness of their souls cannot gain entrance to the House Beautiful.

** The Galleries are at present arranged as follows : I. English. II. Scottish. III. Irish. IV. Celtic. V. Ancient Greek. VI. Ancient Italian. VII. Renaissance Italian. VIII. Modern Italian. IX. French. X. Provençal. XI. Spanish. XII. Portuguese. XIII. Flemish and Belgian and Dutch. XIV. Scandinavian. XV. Slavonic. XVI.-XIX. Oriental : Ancient and Modern. XX.-XXIII. America, North and South. XXIV.-XXV. Miscellaneous.

* * * In a few instances there are adjacent rooms: e.g. beside the first pourtrayal of Beatrice, there is a Dante Room; beside the strangely beautiful dark woman, called *The Worser Spirit*, by Shakespere, there opens off the large Shakespere Gallery; again there are a Spenser Room, a Byron Room, a Tennyson Room, a Browning Room, a Meredith Room, a Swinburne Room. Thus, also, in all the Foreign Galleries there are some separate chambers: e.g. in the Greek section a Homer Room; in the Roman, a Virgil Room; in the German, a Goethe Room; in the French, a Voltaire Room, a Victor Hugo Room, and others. By a slight exercise of a mental process these rooms can be entered and enjoyed exclusively, or their contents can be seen on line.

* * * A piece of rainbow-gold will at any time procure an optical illusion whereby one or more pictures may be isolated; or whereby chronological sequence may be set at naught. Thus the Helen of Homer and the Helen of Marlowe may be seen side by side. In a word, the rainbow-gold can, if wished, be used as an irresistible spell over time, history, space.

On the next page I read :—

FAIR WOMEN

PAINTED BY THE POETS AND ROMANCISTS

Thereafter followed the preface.

FEMINA.

The most beautiful women are those who have never lived, as we understand it.

These are wrought of Beauty, Ideal Love, Immortality. Their garments are lovely words, their voice is music, the light upon their faces is the morning glory of Imagination.

These Fair Women are the daughters of the Soul of Man by the Beauty of the World, whom he calls Femina. They are immortal, for even if in the passage of years, or through accident, they fade in the memories of mankind, they live again in the ever new and beautiful births which are the offspring of this divine marriage.

Time, however, cannot touch their pictured loveliness. They are limned on a canvas beyond the reach of the moth. They are in the mind of man as the innumerable stars are in the firmament.

Femina is born daily. Her soul, Ideala, weaves a rainbow for ever. In the weaving, Femina is wooed by the Soul of Man; when the west is woven, the lovely Dreams are born; when the rainbow fades, while another is swiftly woven from it, its fugitive glories drift into the Looms of Life,

and become the golden threads that are spun into the mind of every human being.

Femina is neither good nor evil. With her right hand she can guide men to the Gates of Heaven, with her left she can lead them to the Portals of Hell. When the Soul of Man first wooed her, she said : "The daughters I shall have will be many : there will be the daughters of Love, the daughters of Passion, the daughters of Lust, the daughters of Hope, the daughters of Joy, the daughters of Dream, the daughters of Pain, the daughters of Sorrow, the daughters of Despair, and the daughters of Vengeance."

"All these," said the Soul of Man, "I foresee and know, save the last."

"Even so," replied Femina ; "for this thing shall be betwixt women and men to the end of days ; that among my daughters will be Daughters of Vengeance."

II

A brilliant French wit, Rivarol, wrote that one could make a great book of what has not been said.

Some day a man of genius will tell us the story of Femina.

It will not be a woman. A woman would better than a man understand what Femina meant and means by the Daughters of Vengeance, but she would relent. Even if passée, she would still remember. With women who have been beautiful, remembrance is as fatal a dissolvent to resolution as temptation is to youth.

Moreover, the author of FEMINA must have lived the dual life of sex. As yet, woman has not lived the life of man.

Once more, the task would need supreme genius. Genius is not enfranchised from the laws of physiology. Let Rivarol, again, say the rest : "Heaven has refused genius to woman, in order to concentrate all the fire in her heart."

III

There are two Don Juans. We all know one ; the other is he who loves Femina, Ideala, in all her daughters, no man being able to see Femina herself. But this other can become impassioned only in the mind. He may love woman, or women ; he can yearn after Ideala only. With the old Florentine painter he can say, the only passionate life is in form and colour.

Don Juan II. owes his best happiness, his rarest joy, to the magicians whose spell is the spell of words that have lain in the moonlight of the imagination, and thereafter gone forth rapt in dream, filled with strange madness.

Don Juan, enter ! The magicians you love are here ; here are the Fair Women of the Imagination of all time ; here, in one, in many, in none perhaps and yet in all, is Ideala.

II

Having perused these preliminary pages, I looked to see what followed. A single quotation heralded the catalogue and the pictures :—

“Beauty is the Sun of Life : and these are the Courtiers of the Sun”—
a line doubtless suggested by a famous passage in Jeremy Taylor : “[These] have splendid fires and aromatick spices, rich wines and well digested fruits, great wit and great courage, because they dwell in his Eye and look on his Face and are the Courtiers of the Sun.”

The catalogue I held in my hand was that for the English section only. The names of the painters began with Chaucer, and came down in point of date as recently as to Francis Thompson.¹

It was with joy I recognised innumerable Fair Women, from the Creseida of Chaucer’s *Troylus* and the lovely Una of *The Faerie Queene*, to the blithe and sweet singer of *Pippa Passes* and the pathetic-eyed Pompilia of *The Ring and the Book* ; the Guenevere of Malory, and the Guenevere of *The Idylls of the King*, and the Guenevere of William Morris ; the haunting eyes and strange dream-faces of those whom I had known in *The House of Life* ; the supreme Iseult of *Tristram of Lyonesse*.

“Hath love not likewise led them further yet,
Out through the years where memories rise and set,
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,
Each with the blush of its own special bloom
On the fair face of its own coloured light,
Distinguishable in all the host of night,
Divisible from all the radiant rest
And separable in splendour ? Hath the best

¹ *Vide* the final lines quoted on the last page.

Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,
 A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love
 Made for all these their sweet particular air
 To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,
 Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,
 Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?
 Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead
 Their musical soft memories, and kept red
 The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes?"

From picture to picture I went with ever new delight. What blithe gladness to recognise, on a canvas by Chaucer, among a series called *The Legende of Good Women*, a Dido outlined immediately one had perused the lines on the frame:—

"The fresshē lady, of the citee queene,
 Stood in the temple, in her estat royalle,
 So richēly, and eke so faire withalle,
 So yong, so lusty, with her eighen glade,
 That yf the God that heven and erthē made
 Wolde have a love, for beautē and goodnesse,
 And womanhode, and trouthe, and semlynnesse,
 Whom sholde he loven but this lady swete?"

Then, a little further on, the same artist's *Queen Alcestis*, clad like a daisy, and walking hand in hand with Love, the God himself lovely

"In silke, embrouded ful of greenē greves,
 In with a fret of redērosē leves,
 The freshest syne the world was first begonne."

Beautiful, indeed, she seemed, clad in royal green,

"A fret of gold she haddē next her heer,
 And upon that a whit coroune shee beer,
 With flourouns smale, and that I shall not lye,
 For al the world ryght as a dayēsyne
 Ycorouned ys with whitē levēs lyte,
 So were the flourouns of hire coroune white;
 For of so perlē, fyne, oriental,
 Hire whitē corounē was imassed al
 For which the whitē coroune above the greene
 Made hire lyke a dayesie for to sene."

A few lines on another frame, in the immortal series of *The Canterbury Tales*, recreated in a moment, in all its vivid details, dainty Madame Eglenyne, with her "mouth ful smal and thereto softe and red," with "eyēn greye as glas."

Suddenly I caught sight of a frame whose panel bore the name of King James of Scotland as artist. I had no sooner read certain lines than I saw that lovely Lady Joanna Beaufort, "the fairest or the freshest youngē floure" that ever bloomed, who, walking in the garden one springtide morn, was seen of the King who was to love and woo and win her, and by her beauty sent "astert The blude of all his body to his hert." Many other half-discerned features gleamed before me, till I smiled as I recognised, on a canvas by Skelton, winsome "Merry Margaret."

" Mirry Margaret,
As mydsomer flowre;
Jentill as fawcoun
Or hawke of the towere;
* * * *
Stedfast of thought,
Well made, well wrought."

But I think that in all that wondrous company of Fair Women, from Chaucer's Dido to Spenser's Una, and from Shakespere's Dark Rosaline to the Iseult of our greatest living poet, I loved none so well as those of the unknown balladists of the north country. Not even in that circle of the Elizabethans where thrilling voices spake and strange and lovely visions arose did I linger so lovingly as with those tragic dreams, the Lady Margaret who lies in "Mary's Quire," Burd Helen, May Margaret whom Clerk Saunders loved so passing well, that too heedless "Kinges daughter of Normandye" whom Glasgerion trysted with, she of the Dowie Dens o' Yarrow, and the brave daughter of the House of Forbes for whom even bloody Edom o' Gordon sorrowed a moment.

" O bonnie, bonnie was her mouth,
And cherry were her cheeks,
And clear, clear was her yellow hair,
Whereon her red blood sleeps.

" Then wi' his spear he turn'd her owre;
O gin her face was wan!
He said, 'Ye are the first that e'er
I wish'd alive again.'"

Let whoso knows the incalculable richness of English poetry, from Shakespere to the youngest of the Victorians, imagine, even on first rapid

consideration, the innumerable lovely pictures or suggestive outlines of Fair Women ! Let those who will prefer the Cleopatra of Mr. Alma Tadema ! Beautiful in her way she may be, but what of lost magic, of incommunicable charm, of lost glow and passion, compared with Her of the Kennaquahair Gallery ! Think not only of the Elizabethans, but of



Cleopatra. By L. Alma-Tadema, R.A.

Herrick, of Carew, Lovelace, Suckling, of all the Jacobean, Carolan, Queen Anne, and Georgian singers. What days and weeks might be spent in the quest of the Fair Women of the contemporaries of Shakespere alone ! What a lovely company born to beautiful life with the Christabel of Coleridge, the Haidee of Byron, the Highland Reaper

of Wordsworth! Think of all limned by Byron alone, by Wordsworth alone, though the loveliness of girlhood rather than of womanhood is oftenest painted by the latter. Neither Julia nor Parisina nor even Haidee is quite so nobly fair as that nameless vision whom the poet saw clad in beauty

“ Like the night,
Of cloudless climes and starry skies : ”

but all in all, what a gallery of Fair Women is given us by Byron ! Not less numerous and lovelier still, those whom we owe to the genius of Keats: Madeline and Isabella, Lamia and Cynthia. Women and exquisite phantoms of women live for ever in the verse of Shelley, none perhaps with more wondrous radiance than Emilia Viviani, scarce visible to mortal eye, as could not but be when she and her creator were

“ One hope between two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One heaven, one hell, one immortality.”

From the Rose Aylmer of Landor to the Rose of Tennyson ! The very names create a loveliness before the mind. With the Fair Women of Browning, from tender Pompilia and blithe Pippa to Evelyn Hope, who might not dwell for a year and a day, and, as the Orientals say, wish the year to be for ever and the day to be eternal. The lovely pictures of the author of *A Dream of Fair Women* press upon one : and, hardly fewer and not less lovely, those limned by Mr. Swinburne. Of all modern creations of the Beauty of Woman, none surpasses the Iseult of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, not the Guenevere of the *Idylls*, not the Lilith of Rossetti. Strange House of Beauty that wherein the last-named guides us. There the Blessed Damozel, and Helen of Troy with Helen the Witch, Rose Mary and fair Scots Queen, Jenny of London wreckage, the lady of the bower, Pandora, Proserpina, Sibylla Palmifera, and Venus Verticordia, and many more, but above all she, Ideala, in many guises, under many names. Lovely, too, that Gallery wherein Rossetti is also our guide:¹ the Gallery where we encounter Beatrice ;

¹ *Dante and his Circle.*

or, as she comes from a woodland copse in Spring, Guido Cavalcanti's Shepherd-maid—

“ She came with waving kisses pale and bright,
With rosy cheer, and loving eyes of flame,
Guiding the lambs beneath her wand aright.
Her naked feet still had the dews on them,
As, singing like a lover, so she came ;
Joyful, and fashioned for all ecstasy : ”

or that almost incomparable Angiola of Verona, beloved of her poet Fazio degli Uberti, whose every motion as well as whose every feature has an ideal grace :—

“ Soft as a peacock steps she, or as a stork
Straight on herself, taller and statelier :
'Tis a good sight how every limb doth stir
For ever in a womanly sweet way.”

Then what a wealth of loveliness do we owe to our younger weavers of dreams. Here, from one of the youngest and as yet scarce known, a lovely Woman whom many will recognise with tears and longing :—

“ No SAINT.
“ Sometimes her mouth with deep regret
Is grave, I know ;
Sometimes her eyes with tears are wet
As a bedewed violet,
And overflow.
She has her human faults—and yet
I love her so.

“ And have I therefore loved amiss
And been unwise ?
Nay, I have only deeper bliss :
I love her just because of this—
Her sins and sighs ;
And doubly tenderly I kiss
Her mouth and eyes.”

At times we ask no more than this: not a line more of description, not a word of further detail. The mind loves to be its own alchemist.

It would be impossible to give an adequate hint, even, of the wealth of the lovely portraits by the Romancists—by the romancists of our

country alone. In this *genre* one room surpassed all others, even that of Scott, even that of Thomas Hardy; that, namely, of the "Brother of Women," if we may apply to George Meredith the designation given by him to Weyburn in *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*—the latest and one of the most delightful of his novels, with a chapter in it (xxvii.) of incomparable freshness and charm, or comparable only with the famous riverside episode in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. Even among the minor men, what living and delightful portraits: as, for example, that of Miss Susannah, by Peacock, in *Crotchet Castle* :—

"She was not one of the slender beauties of romance; she was as plump as a partridge; her cheeks were two roses, not absolutely damask, yet verging thereupon; her lips twin cherries, of equal size; her nose regular, and almost Grecian; her forehead high, and delicately fair; her eyebrows symmetrically arched; her eyelashes, long, black, and silky, fitly corresponding with the beautiful tresses that hung among the leaves of the oak, like clusters of wandering grapes. Her eyes were yet to be seen; but how could he doubt that their opening would be the rising of the sun, when all that surrounded their fringy portals was radiant as 'the forehead of the morning sky'?"

The women of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy alone would be numerous enough to fill the largest anteroom in our imagined Gallery. What room after room, then, from Richardson and Fielding to the youngest of our romancists, Stanley Weyman, and George Egerton, and Murray Gilchrist, to mention three of the most widely differing. Truly, vistas innumerable and seductive.

Of all that lovely company I think I bore away with me most haunting remembrance of three of a diviner beauty than even the most humanly beautiful. The first is by Keats, and is named Melancholy: and the words charged with this supreme magic are these :—

"She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu; and aching pleasure nigh
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung."

The second is by Wordsworth, and is named Duty :—

“ Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear
 The Godhead’s most benignant grace ;
 Nor know we anything so fair
 As is the smile upon thy face ;
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
 And fragrance in the footing treads ;
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong ;
 And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.”

The third is the Sibylla Palmifera of Rossetti :—

“ Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
 Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
 Beauty enthroned ; and though her gaze struck awe,
 I drew it in as simply as my breath.
 Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
 The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw
 By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
 The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.

“ This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
 Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
 By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
 Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
 How passionately and irretrievably,
 In what fond flight, how many ways and days ! ”

So, with that wonderful last Vision in my eyes I turned to go.
 Nothing, even in that far from adequately seen room, even in all the
 rooms of the Kennaquahair Gallery, could surpass Sibylla Ideala.

As I turned I heard a voice, cold, calm, but with an undertone of
 deep emotion.

“ After all,” it said, “ I of all painters, whether with pigments or
 with words, have for man most nearly limned his Ideal Woman :—

“ She was a Phantom of delight
 When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
 A lovely Apparition, sent
 To be a moment’s ornament ;
 Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair,
 Like Twilight’s, too, her dusky hair ;
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May-time and the cheerful Dawn
 A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, to way-lay.

“I saw her upon nearer view,
 A Spirit, yet a woman too !
 Her household motions light and free,
 And steps of virgin-liberty ;
 A countenance in which did meet
 Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
 A Creature, not too bright or good
 For human nature’s daily food ;
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

“And now I see with eye serene
 The very pulse of the machine ;
 A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
 A traveller between life and death ;
 The reason firm, the temperate will,
 Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
 A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
 To warn, to comfort, and command ;
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright
 With something of angelic light.”

“It is true ! It is true !” whispered another and well-known voice, that of Robert Browning.

“But for *you*,” I asked eagerly, “for *you*—

But the Shade passed, and barely I caught the echo of a sigh—

“Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what’s become of all the gold
 Used to hang and brush their bosoms ? I feel chilly and grown old.”

The next moment I realised I was in Grafton Street, in a dark night, and that the rain slid glisteningly from lamp-post to lamp-post.

I too felt chilly and grown old. A young poet passed me, come likewise from Kennaquhair Gallery, and as he went he hummed

“And you may love the woman’s form,
 But I the woman’s heart.”

I could not answer. My mind was full of my vision of Fair Women, but in my ears Browning’s words still whispered mournfully.



New Forest from near Castle Malwood.

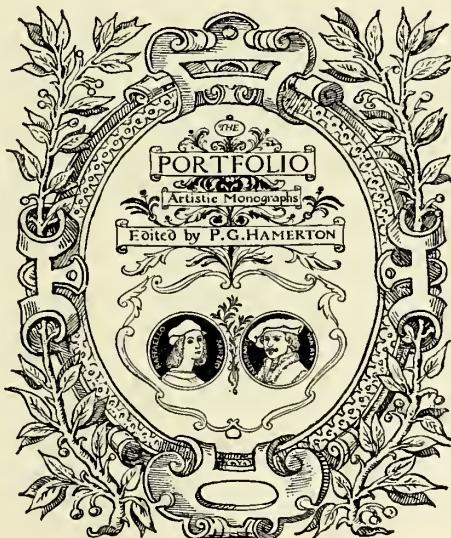
THE NEW FOREST

By

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Illustrated by

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AND JOHN FULLWOOD



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THE NEW FOREST

CHAPTER I

THE CENTRAL FOREST AND ITS CAPITAL

The wholly foreign character of its creation—Its vast extent—The alleged cruelty in its afforesting—Modern views—The nature of forest laws—The forest preserved by their survival—Lyndhurst the centre and capital of the Forest—The Verderers' Hall and Court—The pilgrimage to Mark Ash—Swan Green—The wild and open forest—The Lymington stream—The bush of the forest—The progressive splendour of the trees—The wealth of ornament in the old woods—The charcoal-burner's hut—Voices of the forest—Alone in the sanctuary.

THE historical link which the New Forest has with the associations in every English mind is fixed to the era of the Normans. It was the foreign Norman and Angevin Kings of England who made and used the forest. It lay in the same county, and within a ride of their palace and capital at Winchester; and they took their sport from Malwood on their way to Rouen, riding down after a few days' deer-shooting to Beaulieu or Lymington, where the galleys waited to take them across the Channel, much as the royal yachts wait to take Her Majesty Queen Victoria across the Solent to Osborne.

But the subsequent part played by the forest as a hunting ground for kings, and a district exempt from the general law of the land, and at the absolute disposal of the sovereign, is entirely eclipsed by the picturesque and dramatic incidents which tradition has assigned to its violent creation by the first Norman monarch, and its requital, not only by the violent death of the second, but by those of two other children

of the Conqueror in this fatal precinct. His son, Richard, who was supposed to be in his disposition the special image of his father, when not yet of an age to be girded with the belt of knighthood, was the first victim. He is said to have been fatally injured by the branch of a tree when riding after a stag; and there is a record in Domesday Book of lands restored by his father to their rightful owner as an offering for Richard's soul.¹ The second son of the Conqueror who died in the forest was another Richard, an illegitimate child, whose death seems to have been forgotten in the greater catastrophes of the death of the elder Richard and of Rufus, which preceded and followed it.

Whatever belief is to be given to the tale of cruelty in its afforesting, the size and character of the district, which the Conqueror devoted to his use as a "single and mighty Nimrod," by the simple act of putting it under forest law, is a measure of the scope of that imperial mind. The area was as large as that of the Isle of Wight. It was bounded on the north by the line from the river Avon to the river Ouse, separating Hampshire from Wiltshire; by the river Avon on the west, down to Christchurch. By the sea from Christchurch to Calshot Castle; by the Southampton Water, and by the river Ouse. Within these boundaries are about 224 square miles, containing 143,360 acres of land, of which even now 90,000 acres are still within the boundary of the forest. Its natural features were such as to make it a hunter's paradise. From the swirling salmon river at Christchurch, to the wide lagoon of Southampton Water, it exhibited and still contains, almost every natural feature which made the forests, "*regum penetralia et eorum maximæ deliciae*," "the chief delight of kings, and their secret and secure retreat." Fronted by the sheltered waters of an inland sea, and pierced by the four wide, beautiful, and commodious estuaries of Christchurch, Lymington, Beaulieu, and Southampton Water, its heaths, pools, wastes, thickets and bogs, studded and interlaced with good ground, producing deep and ancients woods, made it a natural and unrivalled sanctuary for game.

The charge against the Conqueror of "wasting" this district appears in its most violent form in the pages of Lingard. "Though the king possessed sixty-eight forests, besides parks and chases, in different parts of England, he was not satisfied, but for the occasional accommodation of

¹ Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, Vol. iv. p. 609.

his court, afforested an extensive tract of country lying between Winchester and the sea-coast. The inhabitants were expelled ; the cottages and churches were burnt ; and more than thirty square miles of a rich and populous district were withdrawn from cultivation and converted into a wilderness, to afford sufficient range for the deer, and ample space for the royal diversion." "Many populous towns and villages and thirty-six parish churches," is the more circumstantial estimate of others. Voltaire first questioned this tradition on grounds of general historical criticism. Cobbett easily detected its improbability, from a mere examination of the *soil* of the forest. It could never have been a "rich and populous district" simply because, for the greater part, the soil is among the poorest in the south of England. Thirty thousand acres were in 1849 reported unfit either for agriculture, the growth of trees, or pasturage. The test of figures also throws a doubt on the destruction of the villages. In the original area of the forest there still remain eleven parish churches on sites where churches were in existence before the time of the Conqueror. "If he destroyed thirty-six parish churches, what a populous country this must have been !" writes Cobbett. "There must have been forty-seven parish churches ; so that there was over this whole district, one parish church to every four-and-three-quarter square miles."

The modern inference from these criticisms goes to the extreme of considering, that in making the forest, William confined himself to enforcing the forest law within its boundaries, thereby reserving the exclusive right of sporting for himself, while "men retained possession of their lands, their woods, mills, or other property, just as before, save for the stringent regulations of the forest law."¹

Even so the interference with liberty and property, due to this extraordinary Norman provision for the amusement of the monarch is almost incredible to modern ideas.

"Forest law" made of the area to which it might at any moment be applied, a kind of "proclaimed district," where the law of the land at once ceased to run, and the rights of property only existed under conditions which were *mainly*, but not entirely, directed to the preservation of game. Its excuse was that it was a convenient method of placing wild

¹ *Arboriculture of the New Forest*, by the Hon. G. Lascelles, Deputy Surveyor, New Forest.

districts, infested by outlaws, under the strong government of the king, in place of the timid “presentments” of frightened villagers, and that it formed a reserve of men and munitions of war for the sovereign. The assize of the forest of 1184 by Henry II. gives a good notion of the working of these laws in the New Forest, and a clue to the survivals which are still there found. No one might sell or give anything from his own wood, if within the forest, which would destroy it : only fire-wood (*estoveria*) was to be taken. The result was that no large timber could be felled, and this therefore ceased to be private property within the Crown forests. The king’s foresters were to be answerable if this wood was destroyed. No one was to *agist* (turn out) his cattle before the king “agisted” his. The king could agist his fifteen days before Michaelmas, and closed the woods fifteen days after Michaelmas. No spring grazing was allowed, so saplings and seedlings had a chance to grow. Open spaces were to be cut where deer could be shot at, like the “rides” in our pheasant covers. No tanner or bleacher of skins was to live in a forest, and “no receivers or thieves.”

But the rigour of forest law was mitigated in the days of Henry III., the whole of whose charter of the forests is framed against the annoyance which the inhabitants had felt from the severity of the former laws. It provided that every free man should be allowed to “agist” his own wood in a forest when he pleased, and to have his own eyries of hawks, sparrow-hawks, falcons, eagles and herons. It granted permission to drive pigs and cattle through the forest, and let them spend a night on the king’s land, with other privileges, which were probably the origin of many “forest rights” now claimed in the district. Are we then to conclude that the hardships suffered by the inhabitants of the “Ytene,” the Saxon name of the New Forest, were limited to such as were incidental to the enforcement of forest laws? Such a consoling answer can scarcely be given. In spite of the inaccuracies of the form in which it has come down to us, the tradition of the wasting of this particular forest and the confiscation of land¹ are too unanimous to be disregarded.

¹ Freeman quotes an instance of confiscation from *Domesday*. “The sons of Godric Ralf hold under the King at Minstrad. Their father had three hides and a half of land. Now his sons have only half a hide. The rest of the ground is in the forest.”



In the Forest near Lyndhurst.

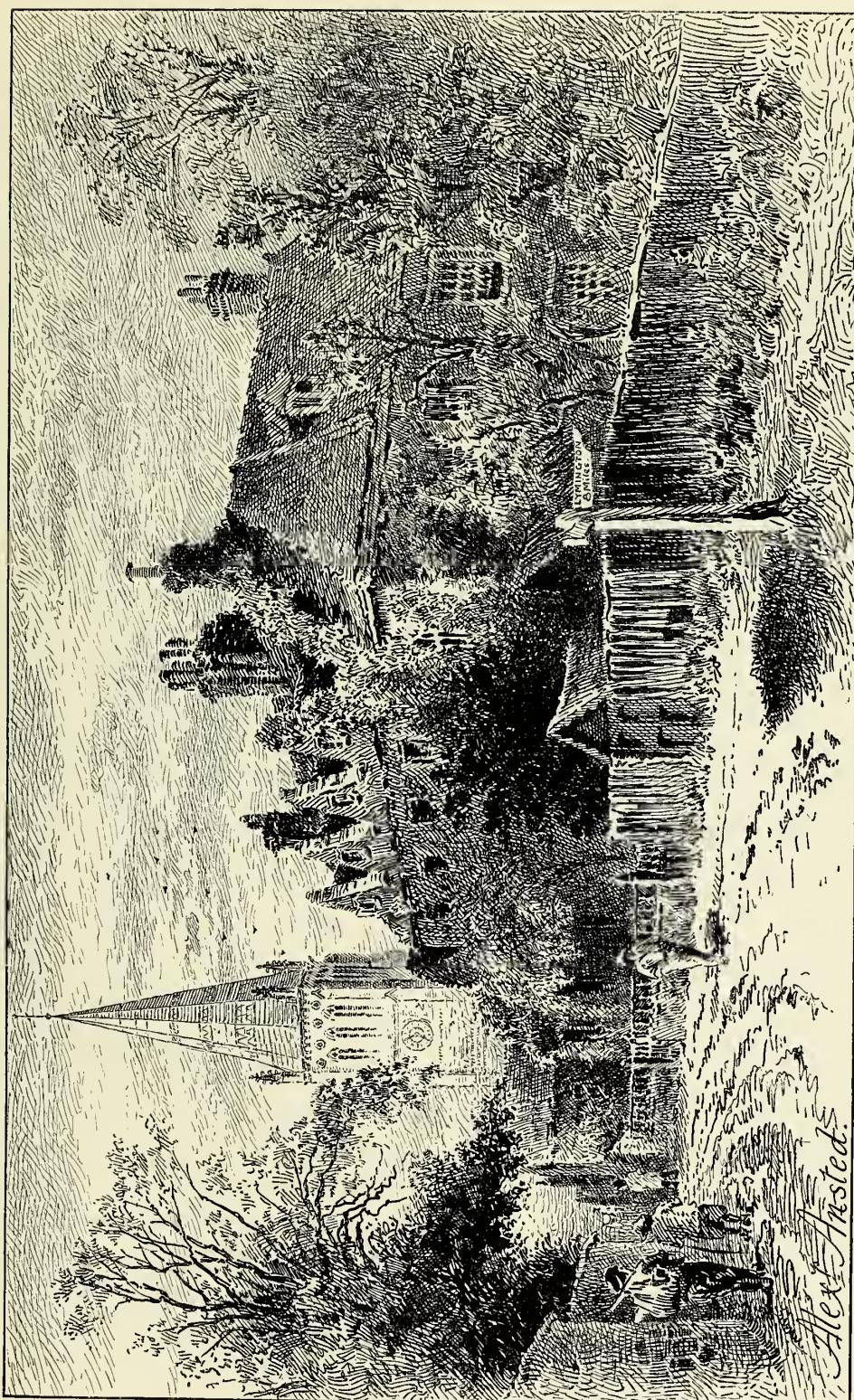
The “stiffness” and cruelty of such a course are too much in keeping with the character of the king, who turned into a desert the whole district between the Humber and the Tees. The forest was perfectly suited by site and soil for William’s purpose, and it is difficult to doubt that in its afforestation hardships were inflicted, which were remembered long after the general hatred of the Normans had died away.

But it must not be forgotten that though the rigours of the forest laws as a means of preserving game relaxed, the protection given by them to the woods was never withdrawn, and it is to them that we owe the preservation of the ancient timber until the present day. When laxly administered, as in the days of Charles I. and the Commonwealth, the woods have been invariably destroyed ; when enforced, as by James I. and later in the days of William III. the trees have increased, and descended to us as one of the finest national inheritances. The present management of the forest, under an act passed in 1877, is based on the principle that all, except some 20,000 acres, inclosed since the year 1700, shall remain open and wild. But in this wild area forest law still runs, and protects the timber from waste and robbery.

In the Verderers’ Hall at Lyndhurst the survivals of forest law and forest customs appear by the dumb witness of fixed engines of justice as primitive as the oaks of Brockenhurst. One end of the bare old chamber is fitted up as a court, in which offenders against the custom of the forest, wood and fern stealers, or those who have transgressed the limits within which cattle may be kept, or other liberties of the forest, are presented by the “agisters,” who play the part of the knights from the hundreds, and townsmen from the township, who “presented” criminals in the shire moots. “Presented,” the offender certainly is ; for he is exposed to the public view in the most primitive dock existing in England. The prisoner sits on a kind of perch, to which he climbs by a step. Behind this is a square back with cross-pieces of black oak, with the rough axe marks still showing, and immediately in front, beyond the narrow interval of the clerk’s table is the full bench of verderers. Assuming, as is probable, that this is a copy of the most ancient arrangement of such courts, we can imagine how some trembling wretch, with the

The Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

Next-Post.



prospect of maiming or blinding before him, must have felt before the scowl of the forest rangers of Norman or Angevin kings, on this seat of justice over against him. Besides the rude accommodation for judges and prisoners, the court contains a recess filled with books on forest law which, by that grace of congruity which seems inseparable from everything in this strangely perfect region, are screened by the most appropriate curtain that could be devised, the skin of a red deer. The walls are decorated by horns of deer, red and fallow. Whatever the history of the great stirrup, which hangs upon the wall, and is said to have belonged to William Rufus, it is a notable relic, and thoroughly in place in this hall of woodland justice. It is clearly the stirrup in which the thickly-mailed feet of the days of plate armour, with their broad iron toes were thrust, thick enough and broad enough to give "support" for the most ponderous horseman in his coat of steel ; and so wide, that the legend that all dogs which could not be passed through it were considered possible enemies to game, and therefore maimed does not seem improbable, except in regard to dates.

Lyndhurst is by size and position the true capital of the forest. There stands the ancient Queen's House, to which the Verderers' Hall is attached, and in which the Deputy-Surveyor of the Forest has his residence, and on the high mound of natural verdure in the centre of the town, the soaring spire of its church shoots up, and dominates the immense tract of woodland, of which it forms the natural centre.

The town has no mean outskirts, or squalid surroundings. The woodlands run up to its old houses like a sea ; and the parks surrounding the fine mansions, which fringe the forest capital, are mere incidents in its scenery, lost and absorbed in the wild woods around them. Cuffnalls Park, a grassy hill clothed with oaks and beeches, lies just outside the town, and leads the eye by an easy transition, from the formal gardens of the Lyndhurst houses, to the uncovenanted graces of the natural forest. Beyond the park the road divides to Burley and Christchurch on the left, to Ringwood on the right, and at the parting of the ways, the forest at once and without reserve flings itself across the field of sight. Thence to Mark Ash, the most renowned of all the ancient woods, the way lies through scenes in an ascending scale of beauty which mark this as the first path to be trodden by the pilgrim and stranger.

The understanding needs time to eddy round the crowding forms that claim its homage. It is the Eleusinian Way, along which the genius of the forest seems to lead the neophyte gently by the hand, saying, "Look on this, and that, and that, first grasp the lesser, then the greater mysteries, until with eyes and understanding opened you may enter and enjoy the earthly paradise of perfect beauty which lies beyond."

Thus the mind keeps its sense of proportion, and the excitement and



Cottage at Lyndhurst.

stimulus of this appeal to the sense of admiration is maintained, as the appetite grows with the beauty which feeds it. Slow and lingering should be the tread, silent and solitary the traveller, in a first journey to the high places of the forest, assured that, though the first steps are through the scenes of laughing rustic prettiness, by lawns and groves, the playgrounds of the forest children, and pastures of the forest cattle, ground that in other times would have been sacred to Faunus and Pan, and all their merry crew, he will at last pass beyond the ways of men, and find himself face to face with masterpieces of Nature's hand, before which he must stand silent and amazed.

From Cuffnalls Park two winding roads lead up the steep ascent on either hand. In the space between, sloping gently upwards towards the light is neither field nor fence, but against the sky-line is ranged a crescent of oaks and beeches, fronted by most ancient thorns. Three shapes, three colours distinguish tree from tree, through their centre a green glade winds up into the wood, and from their feet a smooth lawn of turf flows gently down into the point at which the roads divide, watched on either hand by a sentinel oak.

“Swan Green” is the name of this beautiful lawn. Beyond its slope lies the village of Emery Down, after which the signs and sounds of human habitation disappear with a suddenness almost startling. The road lies through rolling tracts of the most wild and ancient forest land. Right and left the slopes are clothed with trees in the prime and vigour of their age. Some few are oaks; but the beech is the indigenous, or perhaps the growing tree of this stately tract of forest, and from this point onwards the mind is incessantly invited to consider the manifold beauties of form which even one species of forest tree presents.

There seems no limit to the hall of columns which fades away into dim distance in the wood, though the space between the stem is clear and open. The gray trunks shoot straight upwards to the sky each with its smooth surrounding lawn. The tallest beeches which spring on the slope of the hill-sides seem to draw back with a certain reticence from the broad pathways of the glades, drooping their branches downward and wrapping them round their feet with a dainty and almost feminine dignity and reserve. Others grow like oaks, flinging their branches abroad in wild disordered tangles.

There are those among them which have already passed their prime, and yet scarcely show the symptoms of decay. In many beeches the first years of decline add dignity to their forms. The tree dies from the top; but at first this appears only by a cessation of upward growth. The branches at the summit thicken, cluster, and multiply, like the antlers on an old stag’s horns, giving to the whole massive and weighty proportions in strange contrast to the usual graceful and feathery outlines of its race. In others, further advanced in the stages of decay, the vigour of the lower branches so arrests the eye, that it scarcely travels beyond the mass of leafage, though above and from the centre of the

healthy boughs an upright growth of bare gray limbs rises grimly naked and alone.

Some two miles from Lyndhurst the hush of the forest begins. If the wind is still, and the trees motionless, there is a silence which can be felt. In winter or early spring, before the summer migrants have arrived, or the hum of insects has begun to stir the air, the sense of hearing is not excited by any form of sound. There are neither men nor children



A Dead Giant, Mark Ash.

in this part of the wood, the cattle are away on distant lawns, the deer are hidden in the thick inclosures, and the great birds which haunt the forest are away, in the still grander and more solemn precincts of the most ancient woods. Beyond Emery Down the high wood gives place to a rolling natural park, clothed with heather, cotton grass, and gray whortle bushes, and studded with single trees, or small groups, in pairs and triplets, of perfect form. Here is seen that phase of beauty so often desired and seldom found, *distance* in the forest, bounded only by

a far-off misty screen of luxuriant wood. Beyond this open park, the imagination is kept in constant excitement and expectation by the increasing size and beauty of the trees. Each group seems to surpass the last, and to mark the ultimate limits of grace and size, until something even grander and more stately takes the pride of place. Their splendour dominates the mind to the exclusion of all other subjects of thought. You become a connoisseur not only in their general beauty but in its particular forms. You analyse them into types, grades, and permanent varieties, and no longer compare them promiscuously, but form standards for the different classes. Some of the finest ancient beeches have apparently been pollarded, and so far from this proving a disfigurement in their ripe maturity, it gives them a variety of form and a spread of limb, which makes a fine contrast with the towering domes which top the single stems of the natural tree. Many of the pollards seem to come late into leaf, and the effect is particularly fine when in spring their ruddy buds surround some other forest giant in the full glory of early growth.

On the left side of the road, some two and a half miles beyond Emery Down, there is such a group of immense spreading pollards, above which towers the rounded head of an unshrouded tree, capped with a cloud of vivid green floating leaf-buds.

Opposite the beech circle, a low line of alders gives promise of a swamp, and the ground descends into a "bottom"; not the squashy river of grass usually known by that name in the Surrey coombes, but a flat swampy valley of gray and lichen-covered heather and cotton-grass, scored and intersected by the manifold windings of a slow, dark stream, curling round masses of cattle-gnawed and ivy-strangled alders and sallows, heaped and encumbered with soft mounds of black and gray mud, studded with little bulbous oak stems, stunted and decayed, and shattered by the lightning of the thunder clouds which follow the water. The struggle for life against water and lightning must also be made heavier by the force of the wind in this valley of desolation, for even the tough alders had been uprooted by the gales, and lay prostrate in the marsh, with cavernous hollows beneath their roots haunted by water-rats and tiny trout. In the most stagnant parts white limbs of drowned oaks raise their skeleton arms above the marsh,

and the ragged ponies which graze round the margin, test carefully at each step the ground in which so many of their companions have sunk and perished when weak with winter and famine.

The colouring of this swampy hollow is in complete contrast to the brilliant tints of the sound lawns and high woods. It has only two tones, gray and black. Yet even there the finishing touch of nature completes the picture. The black stream and alder clumps are fringed and studded with golden marsh marigolds, and over the gray mud creeps an exquisite little plant with five-lobed leaves and gray starry flowers like silver stone-crop. A low ridge of better soil divides this slow rivulet of the swamp from the bright waters of a typical New Forest stream, the Lymington river. On its banks the solemn beeches once more cluster, and the hurrying stream goes dancing through the wood golden clear with topaz lights, past the lines of columned trees, slipping from pool to pool with little impatient rushes, resting a moment in the deeper pools, then climbing the pebble beds which bar them in, and hurrying down to the sea, at Lymington Haven.

This river, like that at Beaulieu, belongs wholly to the forest. Here it is a mere brook, with exquisitely rounded banks of turf and moss, as if the wood fairies who put the acorn and beech nuts to bed for the winter had tucked in the coverlet on either side and then embroidered it with flowers. The pools are full of enormous "boatmen" which lurk under the banks and dart out at every leaf, insect or stick which comes floating down the stream. Each morsel is seized, pulled about and examined by the creatures, like a company of custom-house officers at a port, and as a steady rain of *débris* from the trees descends upon the stream throughout the day they are kept busy from dawn till dusk. Even so near its source this stream sometimes overflows its banks. In one spot the whole of the surface roots of a beech have been pared clear of soil as if by a trowel. It is not a large tree, but the spread of root is fifteen paces across.

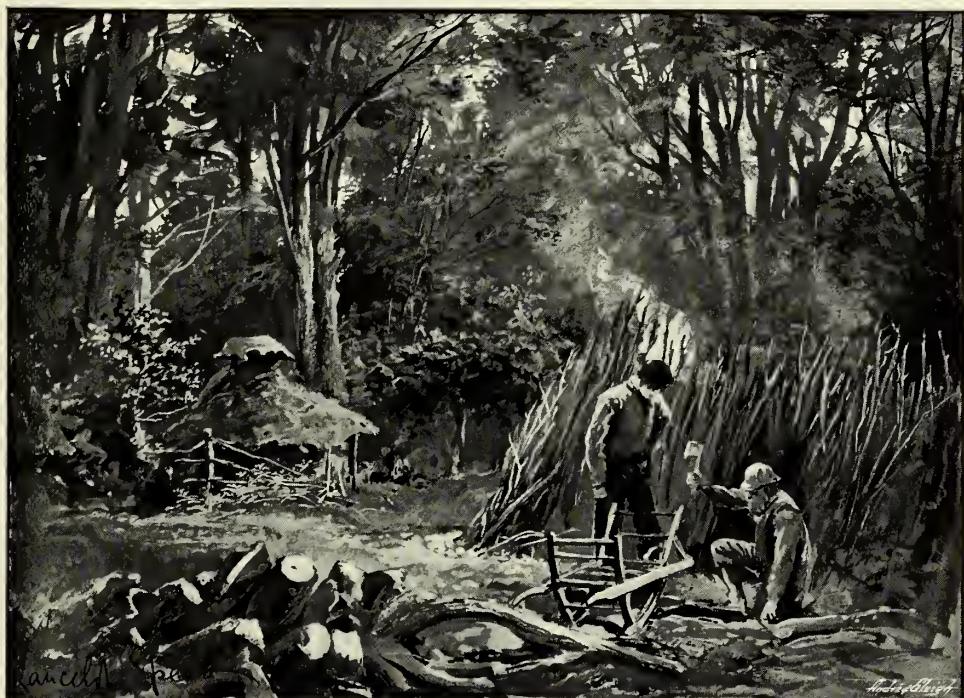
West of the river the ancient trees once more close in towards the road, and beyond them on either side are younger woods planted by the Crown. Very few young trees appear in this part of the old forest, but on the right hand of the path is a beautiful example of tree protecting tree from the destroying cattle. A most ancient crab-tree, hoary with

lichen and green with ivy, has thrown its protecting arms round the stem of a fine young oak. The smooth clean stem now shoots up clear of the old crabtree, whose delicate pink blossom mixed with the black ivy berries, shows that it is vigorous still in spite of its double burden of carrying the ivy and caring for the oak.

An example of the astonishing detail and completeness of the natural beauties of the forest, beauty presented on a scale so large, that the absence of detail and ornament might well pass unobserved, may be seen round the stem of every great tree that fronts the road. Take for instance the base of the beech column which stands opposite to the grass track that leads to the left to the charcoal burner's hut below Mark Ash. It is the base of a compound column, thicker than the piers of Durham Cathedral, with seven projecting pilasters. The bark is like gray frosted silver, crusted in parts with a scale ornament of lichen, and in the interstices between the pillars with short golden-brown moss. The rounded niches which encircle its base are laid out as natural gardens ; which in April of the present year were planted and arranged as follows. In one a violet bed, covered with blossoms which touched the bark of the trunk. In the next a briar-rose, a foot high in young leaf. In the third three curling fronds of bracken fern. In the fourth a moss-grown billet of sere wood, and a pile of last year's beech mast. In the fifth a young woodbine, which had slipped into the inmost crevice between the sheltering pilasters, and was already adorned with little whorls of green leaves. In the sixth a wood sorrel, with trefoils of exquisite green-like chrysoprase, and in the seventh niche four seedling hollies, a tiny rowan tree, and a seedling beech as high as a pencil. The whole was encircled by a close carpet of moss turf, and the *débris* of leaves. The eye sees these minor beauties in series and succession ; but no mere catalogue can convey an adequate idea of the delight and satisfaction afforded to the mind by this prodigal abundance of natural ornament.

The cries of the woodland birds, which hitherto had hardly broken the silence of the forest, showed that the attractions of cover, food, and water must be combined in a measure not yet encountered in the adjacent glades. The bright sun poured between the green leaves and reached the dark hollows among the pines below, and the wood rang with the cries of the larger and rarer birds which have here their haunt. The hooting and

yelping of the owls, though it was noon-day, was almost like the intermittent cry of hounds that have strayed from the pack, and are hunting some solitary deer. The laughing of the woodpecker, the harsh and angry screams of the jays, the crow of the cock pheasant, and the cuckoo's call, showed that animal life, hitherto so scarce in this wealth of arboreal growth was here abundant and in evidence. The only trace of man's presence was the rudest and most primitive dwelling known to civilized



Charcoal Burner's Hut, Bolderwood.

life. In the centre of a clearing, surrounded on three sides by a towering ring of monster beeches, was a deserted charcoal burner's hut, with the "burning circle" in front of the door. Except for the setting of good English trees it might pass for part of the kraal of some race of woodland dwarfs, with its "zeriba" in front. The last is a large circle of brushwood, supported by posts and rails of rough oak-poles. Within was a flooring of black ashes, neatly raked into a raised ring at a few feet from the circumference.

The hut looks like a white ants' hill covered with scales of turf turned grass inwards, with a kind of mushroom cup on the apex. The only sign that the dwelling was not constructed by savages is the square door and porch, hewn of roughly squared oak. A glimpse of the interior shows that the framework is a cope of strong oak poles, and the only furniture a couple of sacks of dry beech leaves, a low wooden bench, and one or two iron pots. A similar hut in Gritnam wood is inhabited throughout the year by an adder-hunter. He does not even indulge in the luxury of a beech leaf mattress or a wooden door ; but lives in health and comfort with a low oak bench for his bed, and a faggot of heather for curtain and door.

A narrow glen and stream, with an ascent bare of trees forms a kind of precinct, before the last and inmost circle of the wood, where the neophyte may pause, and see revealed before him, the final and crowning secret of the forest. The voices of Dodona's doves echo softly throbbing from the grove, and invite him "to touch, to see, to enter" and be from henceforth one of the initiated. On either side the enormous beeches rise, some tossing their branches like the arms of Blake's angels, sweeping skyward with uplifted hands, others with huge limbs flung supine on the turf, others like slender pillars from which spring fretted vaults and arches, trees male and female, trees of architecture, and trees of life, rising in measured order and gradual succession on the sides of a theatre of woodland turf. Where the solemn aisles diverge they are walled with holly, roofed with the green of the beech, and floored with flesh colour and gold, as the broken lights glitter on the carpet of moss and wind-sown leaves. Half of a clustered beech had fallen in one shock to the ground, smashing into ruin the tall hollies below it, and scattering their broken limbs in a yet wider circle of destruction. The scent of beech and holly from the crushed and broken fragments overpowered all the odours of the forest. Deer had been browsing on the fallen boughs, and three fallow bucks sprang up from behind the ruin and rushed through the hollies beyond. Nine fallen limbs, each a tree itself in size and proportions, lay spread upon the ground like the fingers of a fan. The coating of moss with which it was completely covered made it easy to walk up over the limbs to the point of fracture and thence look down into the forest. In front lay beds of young holly glittering in the sun, the

ground between them covered with the vivid green of wood-sorrel. Beyond, and around, on every side the towering forms of the gigantic trees stand clear, each behind each in ordered ranks without movement or sound in the still air, except for the cooing of the ring-doves and the screams of the wood-owls moving in the forest. It is a temple without walls, with a thousand pillars and a thousand gates, aisles innumerable and arches multiplex, so lofty, so light, so ancient and so fair that it seems the work not of natural growth but of some enchantment, which has raised it in the forest far from the home of man, unpeopled, untrodden and alone.

Such is the ancient wood of Mark Ash, in itself, its setting and surroundings. It may be doubted whether elsewhere in England is to be found another to excel it or equal it in the completeness of its beauty, and in the strange perfection of the growth, not only of its trees, but of its turf, its flowers and its lawns, to which the will of man has not contributed the laying of a sod or the setting of a daisy.

CHAPTER II

THE CENTRAL FOREST (*continued*)

The forest heaths—Beaulieu and Ober Heath contrasted—Fleming's thorns—Matley Heath and Bog—Flight of the woodcocks at dusk up Matley Passage—Denny Bog by twilight—Alum Green and the Roman Arch—The Knightwood oak—Heronry in Vinney Ridge—Young herons; buzzards; the adder-hunter—Brockenhurst—Night in the forest.

THE sense of freedom and limitless distance which always accompanies a forest walk is never more complete than when the traveller emerges from roaming in the great woods or thick plantations and finds himself on one of the wide heaths which stretch for miles beside the woodlands, and are themselves surrounded by distant lines of forest beyond which lie heaths, and yet more forest far away down to the shores of the Solent. Beaulieu Heath is perhaps the finest of the open stretches of forest scenery. There is something so new, fresh and exhilarating in the sudden presentation of this apparently unlimited stretch of high open level ground, swept by the volume of the over-sea wind that comes rolling up from the Channel, which reacts on the mind with a kind of intoxication of space and air. Miles of whispering pines are the background to the heath: beyond all is open, level and free, the ground falling imperceptibly till the near horizon is nothing but a level line of heather, below which the intersecting waters of the Solent are lost to sight, though the blue hills of the Isle of Wight rise like the background of a panorama, far beyond the invisible strait which lies between. There are those who prefer the forest heaths even to the forest woods. Doubtless each gains by contrast, the more so that the change from the high woods to the sweeping moorland, is often as sudden as the shifting of a scene upon the stage.

Take for instance the wide stretch of Ober Heath, which fringes the

Heath in the New Forest near Lyndhurst



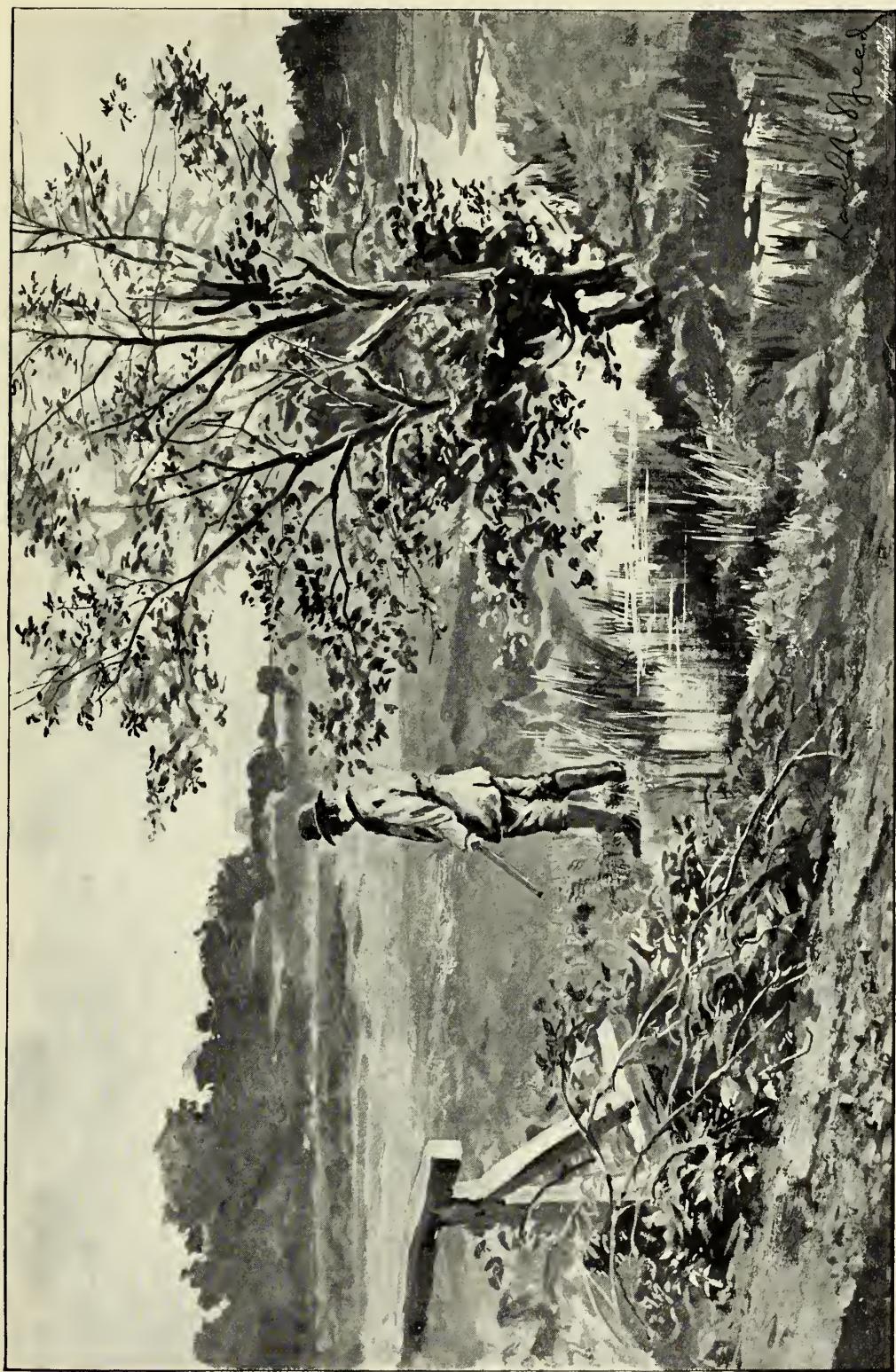
great plantations of Rhinefield Walk, and runs almost down to Brockenhurst from the modern castle which has been built upon the site of the keeper's lodge at Rhinefield. The upper portion of the heath is like a scene in the Surrey pine districts, studded with self-sown Scotch fir, and clothed with gorse bushes, rough heather, and a tiny dwarf willow, which creeps upon the ground like ivy, but otherwise is a perfect willow bush, studded in spring with tiny satin globes, like the "palms" of the common osier, but no larger than shot or tare-seed. Far away across the dark purple heather and golden gorse, the quick stream of Ober-water runs through a flat green lawn to join the Brockenhurst river just above New Park, with the hill of Brockenhurst Manor breaking the sky-line to the right. The left side of the heath is fringed by heavy forest ; but in this case the transition from heath to wood is broken by a wide scrub of dwarf thorns, round as beehives, matted with heather, and knots and beards of lichen. Some hundred acres must be covered by "Fleming's thorns," as this dense thicket is called. Those who have seen both, compare it to the mimosa scrub of the African plains. Like the mimosa it is a favourite haunt of game ; and the wild deer love to lie in its secluded and impenetrable jungle.

No fence or boundary marks the transition from heath to forest. The river slips from the common, between clumps of holly and single waving birches, winds down a glade, and in a few yards is lost to sight among masses of oak, alder, ash, and pines. Looking backwards towards the sunset along this borderland, the rugged outlines of the gorse and fir, and the broken and wind-swept hollies and thorns which fringe the full fed forest, give to the scene an air of wildness and confusion in striking contrast to the serene tranquillity which reigns within the solemn precincts of the woods. Ober Heath is an example of the forest moor inclosed by wooded hills. On Matley Heath, south of Lyndhurst, the converse may be seen ; a barren heather-clad hill rising steadily from low wooded ground on either side, and then descending in a long and gentle slope to an immense expanse of flat and barren moor. This wild and desolate tract is perhaps the largest unbroken stretch of heather and infertility in the whole forest. Under the names of Matley Heath, Black Down, Yew-tree Heath, and Denny Bog, it stretches east of Lyndhurst in a straight line of five miles to the Beaulieu river. Cobbett, who rode across it after having missed

his way, and hated heaths because they would not grow his pet swede turnips, calls it "about six miles of heath even worse than Bagshot Heath ; as barren as it is possible for land to be." From Lyndhurst the road gradually ascends, the soil all the way growing thinner and poorer, until the bare gravel shows in white patches and plains among the starved heather. Yet on the right, and at no great distance are thick woods of the finest timber in England, and even on the crest of the hill, a fine rounded wood of beech and oak, Matley Wood, stands up like a fertile island, with a sea of heather and bog round it. To the left lies the great stretch of Matley Bog, and to the right a narrow strip of hard sand where the road creeps round the head of the morass. Here is a picture which, but for the road and bridge cannot have changed for a thousand years. A stream flows down from a wide valley in the thick woods, and spreads itself among green marshes, sedge, and alder copses, at the top of the bog, whose level and impassable plain loses itself in the black heath which stretches far beyond the railway into the southern forest. At dusk, the woodcocks, which rest in the forest, come flying up from the bog to the woods. On the last day of April of the present year, at a quarter before eight, the woodcocks were already on the wing. Night was settling down on the heath, but the horizon was still light above the hill, and tall clouds were passing across the west. A sound came from the bog, like the twittering of swallows on the wing, mixed with low croaking cries. Then a bird with steady flight like that of a curlew on the mud-flats came up out of the dusk, and crossed the road, uttering its curious call at regular intervals, and making straight for the head of the woodland glen. This was followed by a pair, which, after crossing the road flew tilting at one another, and turning and twisting in the air all round the semi-circle of lofty trees which crown the hollow in the woods. Bird after bird then flew up from the bog, until the forest glen was full of their dusky forms twisting and twining, like swallows or fern owls, against the evening sky.

Next day a young woodcock was brought into Lyndhurst ; it had been caught in the wood close to the Lyndhurst race-course, the rest of the brood were seen hiding close by, with their heads laid upon the ground and bodies motionless like young plover, while the parent bird flew round, and endeavoured to decoy the lad who found them

Matley Passage and Matley Bog.



from the spot. This young bird was a most beautiful creature, no longer covered with down, but fully fledged to all appearance, and adorned with the beautiful brown mottling which makes the woodcock's plumage one of the most perfect pieces of tone-ornament in nature. As the night creeps on, blurring every minor feature of the scene, and leaving only the faint gleam of waters and the black forms of the alder clumps from distance to distance in the bog, the cry of the wild-fowl, echoed by the dark wall of forest at the back, shows that all the natives of the marsh are awake and moving. The croak of the woodcocks, the calling and screaming of the plovers, the bleating of the snipe, and the harsh barking of the herons, winging their way from Vinney Ridge to the Beaulieu river, fill the air with sound, though the creatures themselves are invisible; while from the forest the yelping and screeching of the owls, the incessant drone of the "churr worms," and the whirr of the great wood-beetles, answers the calls from the open moor. At such times the stranger will do well to seek the road and return across the heath; for once entangled in the great woods which lie southward of the marsh, he may well be lost till morning. In the angle between this mass of forest and the railway, lies Denny Bog, a more distant and even more picturesque portion of this irreclaimable waste. The words bog, marsh and swamp are often used indifferently. Properly understood they apply to widely different conditions.

A bog is a portion of ground lying in soak. In the forest they are found of all sizes, from the area of a dining-room table to that of Hyde Park. The rim of the bog is hard enough to prevent the escape of the water except by gradual soakage, and thus the service is level. Yet the beauty of the bogs is known and appreciated by every "forester," though they are a fruitful source of disaster to riders who do not know how they often lurk under the very shadow of the timber at the edge of the sound land of the woods. There is a tiny bog on the edge of Gritnam Wood which may serve as an example. On the verge of the common which lies below the wood is a pretty little circle of golden moss, with patches of green grass, and pools of black water no larger than a man's hand. Towards the centre the colouring is as brilliant as that of sea-weeds and sea-anemones seen in sunlit water. The mosses grow into spongy pillows, with exquisite feathery fronds. Some

of this moss is rose-pink ; other kinds brilliant green, or tawny brown, and from the whole comes a scent like that of fern roots. A man may walk across in safety, but a horse breaks through the spongy surface, and nearly always falls, throwing its rider in the process, for the sucking mosses prevent any effort at recovering its footing after the first stumble.

Herons, like the monks of old, seem always to choose a picturesque site for their home. Their home in the wooded hills of Wytham, looking far far across the flats of the upper Thames valley, or in the tall pines of Woolmer Forest, near the Deer's Hut common, in the steep cliffs of the Findhorn river, and last, but not least beautiful, the heronry in the thick plantation at the head of the Penn Ponds in Richmond Park, where the London herons build almost unknown to the thousands of visitors who skate upon the lakes in winter, or ride and drive past them in summer, are each the chosen spots in their own beautiful vicinity. The heronry on Vinney Ridge, about four miles from Lyndhurst, is no exception to the rule, and the path to it leads through some of the finest woodland scenery. Part lies along an ancient Roman road, which runs over the summit of Lyndhurst Hill.

From this the view ranges far to south, west, and east, while at its foot lies Alum Green, perhaps the largest and most beautiful of all the forest lawns. It is a kind of natural "savannah" in the woods. The extent of sound turf covers many acres, dotted with park-like groups of trees, surrounded on all sides with a ring of ancient timber on sloping banks. It is the favourite resort of all the ponies and cattle in this part of the Forest. The ancient path joins the main road to Christchurch, near the Lymington stream, about a mile below the bridge which crosses it on the way to Mark Ash. Here also is a bridge, of a single arch of brick. The stream comes hurrying down to this through the open forest. Three tributaries have already swelled its waters between this and the upper crossing-place, and river and banks alike are deeper and even lovelier than before. The broken banks are planted, wreathed, and fringed by every kind of forest flower, shrub, and fern, of the largest and most luxuriant growth. Anemones, cuckoo-flowers, violets, king-cups, young bracken, and hard-fern, woodbine and wild rose, heart's-tongue, and moss like lengths of velvet cover the banks, the beech-boughs arch the stream, and on each side the open wood extends to the

utmost limit of sight. The otters make this part of the river their summer home. Two young ones were recently dug out from the earth a short way below the "Gate House," which stands near the bridge, and during the day they frequently lie up, either in the dry forest near, or under the roots of a big tree by the banks. The habits of the New Forest otters on this stream seem very well known to those who are interested either in hunting or observing them. They travel a long way down the river at night, perhaps past Brockenhurst and as far as Boldre, or even below to near Lymington. They then hunt the stream upwards in the early morning until they reach the narrow waters, where they stay during the day. The pack of otter-hounds, which generally visits the forest in the early summer, usually meet at Brockenhurst or some other point down stream and pick up the fresh "drag" of the otters, which have returned up stream in the early hours of the morning. Hunted deer also make for the water at this point, and endeavour to throw off the pack before seeking refuge in the thick recesses of Knightwood and Vinney Ridge. A fallow buck finds the dimensions of the stream quite adequate for the temporary destruction of scent. Slipping down some tributary brooklet it will pick its way down to a pool, and then, gently sinking, until nothing but head and horns remain above water, lies as motionless as a squatted hare listening to the shouts, talking, casting, and excitement on either bank, until refreshed and invigorated it springs once more to the bank and leads its pursuers another circle through the woods and bogs of the forest.

North of the road, a little beyond the "Roman Arch," as tradition calls this bridge, is the inclosure of Knightwood. This large wood, though in part replanted in 1867, contains many remnants of ancient forest embedded in the new timber, among other the celebrated Knightwood Oak. Thus it shows in juxtaposition both the artificial and natural modes of reproducing forest. On the edges of the wood are close plantations of Scotch fir, in formal rows, which shelter and direct the upward growth of the young oaks between. In the centre, where old trees have died and been removed, or have in past time cleared a space which their present height leaves free to light and air, young oaks, birches, and beeches are growing in irregular masses and of all heights and sizes. Among this confused multitude is the great Knightwood Oak



Knightwood Oak, Mark Ask.

This forest king stands in a smooth round lawn, all other trees keeping their distance beyond the outermost circle of its branches. The main trunk of the oak rises like a smooth round Norman pillar, and at no great height breaks into eight limbs which radiate from it like the sticks of a fan, in very straight and regular lines. The extremities of these show signs of decay, but the tree seems as firm as ever. Its rigidity is such that in a heavy gale, though the tops of the branches move, the mass of the tree seems as stiff as if cast in iron. The limbs, though untouched by decay, are coated nearly to the summit by thick green moss, and the effect of this symmetrical mass of timber springing from a trunk of such magnitude—its girth is $19\frac{1}{2}$ feet—is beyond description dignified and imposing. The tallest beeches in the forest are probably those in which the herons build in the Vinney Ridge inclosure, on the opposite side of the Christ Church Road from Knightwood. The wood lies on the top of a fine saddle-back hill, covered with trees of every kind, except elm, and of all ages, from old ivy-bound oaks to immense beeches and thorn-bushes wreathed with woodbine. There is a far greater extent of open turf here than in most “inclosures,” and when the fences are removed in 1899, which is the date fixed for its disenclosure, it will take its place as a natural part of the ancient forest.

The beeches in which the herons build are so lofty as to lift their summits above the natural angle of sight, even as the head is usually carried in the forest; if it were not for the glimpses of the great birds silently launching themselves from the tree-tops before their disturber has approached the nest, the existence of the colony would not be suspected. It was the flight of a single heron slipping noiselessly from the nest, and soaring back in a wide circle to watch over the brood, that first indicated to the present writer that he was in the herony. Even then the height of the trees, their distance apart, and the thickness of the foliage at the top made the discovery of the nest no easy task, had not the clattering noise made by the young indicated their whereabouts. The presence of birds of prey, though usually screened from sight by the thickness of the forest, was well illustrated by an incident which took place after the momentary flight of the old herons. A sparrow-hawk dashed up through the wood, and poising itself above the

The Heronry at Vinney Ridge.

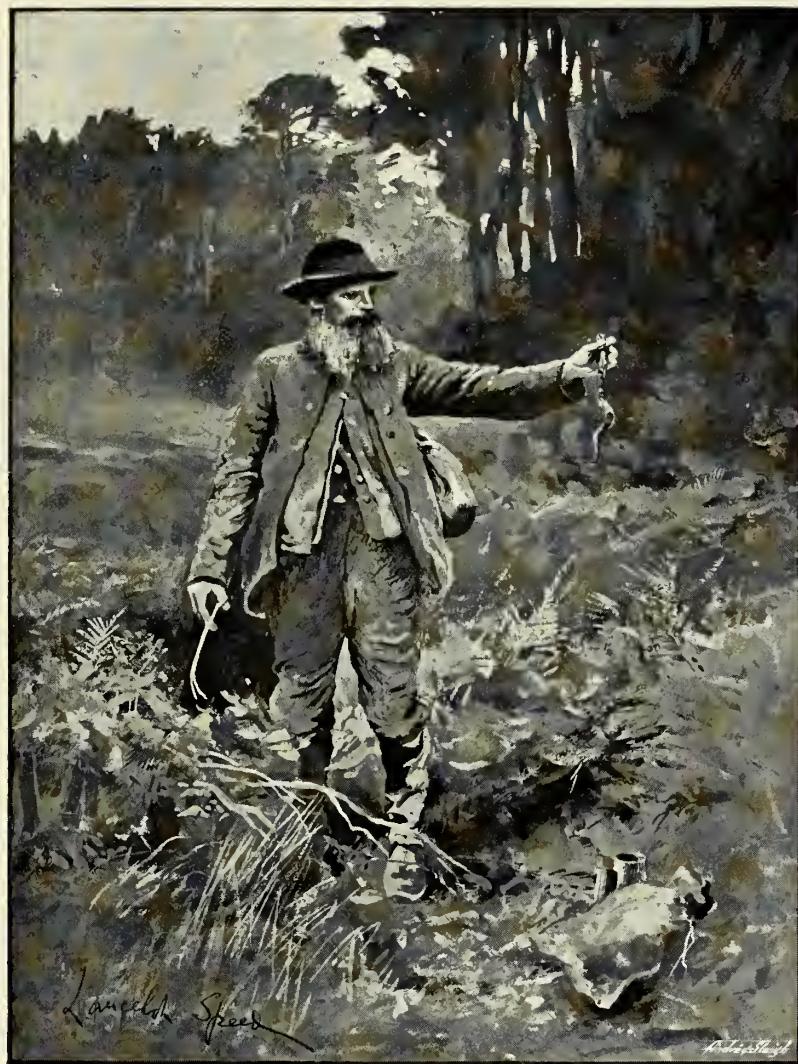


trees, flew from nest to nest, looking down into them from a height of a few feet, and apparently expecting to find a brood small enough for one to be carried off before the old birds returned. The hawk's visit only lasted for a minute, for at that moment five old herons came sweeping over the wood, and remained soaring in hurried and anxious flight far above the tops of the loftiest trees. When we retired to some distance and stood still by a timber stack, bird after bird pitched on the trees, and after one or two subdued croaks of greeting, flapped down into the nest. The eyries appear absolutely inaccessible, built, as they are, at heights of from seventy to ninety feet from the ground on trees which rise two-thirds of that height without a single branch. Yet they are climbed, otherwise the inquiry as to whether you "could do with some young herons"—or young "cranes," for both names are used in the forest—would not be addressed to those who are known to have a taste for keeping odd pets so often as it is.

There are a few ancient inhabitants who still know the favourite nesting places, not only of the herons, but of rarer birds, such as the common and honey-buzzard. The forest is said to be the last breeding place of the honey-buzzard left in England, and there is no reason, in the present condition of the woodlands, why either of these birds should forsake the district, except in the prices offered for their eggs by "oologists." The keepers protect a nest when found, and as the honey-buzzard does not lay till summer is well advanced, there is more chance of its nest escaping observation than for those of the early-building birds.

The strangest survival of any industry connected with the taking of wild animals in the forest is that of the "Adder-hunter," probably the very last representative in England of a race who for upwards of two centuries have contributed their strange nostrum of adder's fat to the pharmacopœias of central and western Europe. The last of the Adder-hunters is a strikingly handsome man, probably past his sixtieth year, short, with curling beard and hair, and equipped in what is probably a unique costume for his peculiar trade. Thick boots and gaiters protect him from the chance of a bite from the snakes. He is slung all over with bags of sacking, his pockets are stuffed with tins and boxes, and from his chest hangs a pair of long steel forceps. In his hand he carries a light

stick with a ferrule, into which when he rouses a snake he puts in a short forked piece of hazel wood, and, darting it forward with unerring

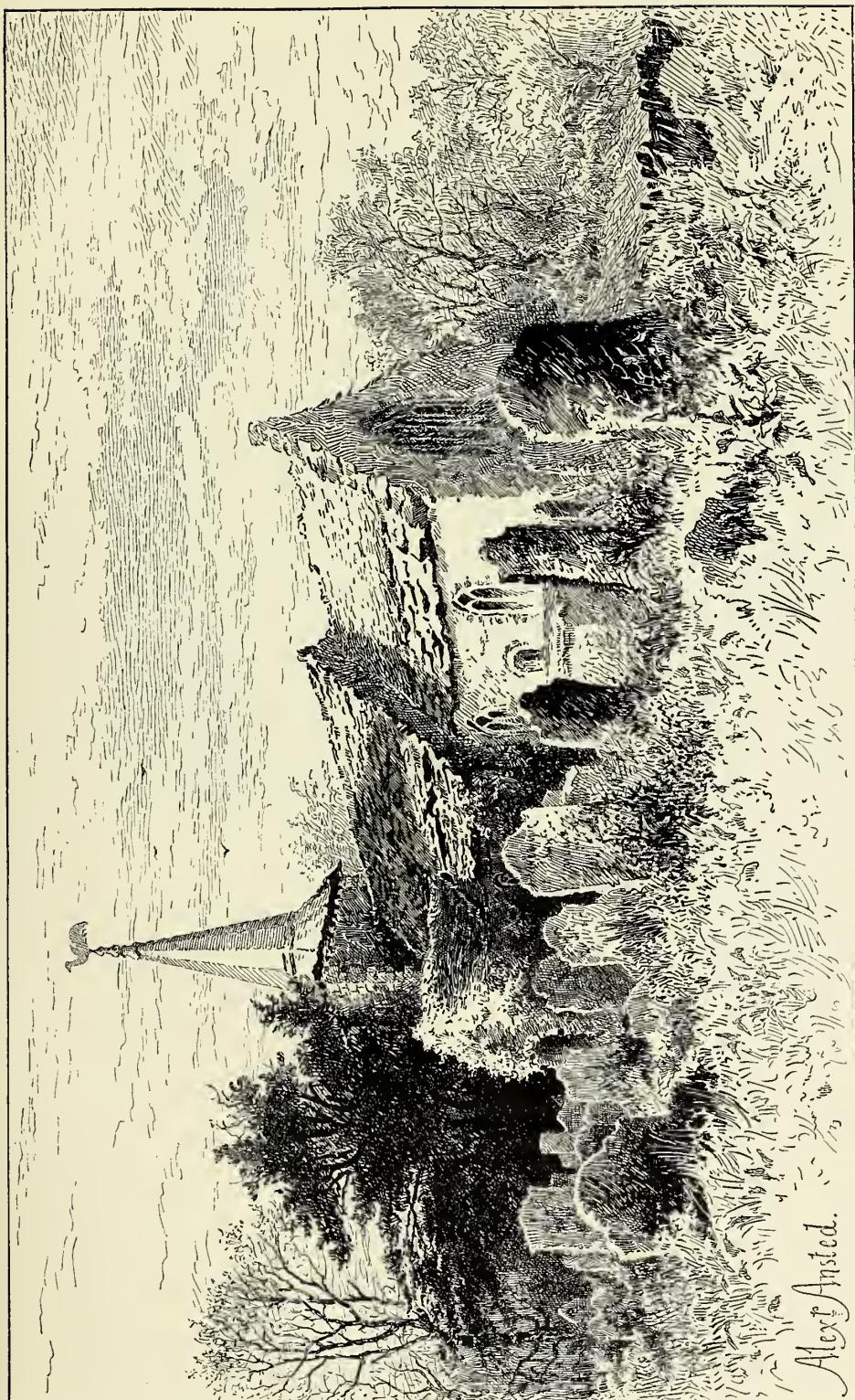


The Adder-Catcher.

aim, pins the adder to the ground. Stooping down he picks it up lightly with the forceps, and after holding the writhing creature up for a moment, in which he looks like a rustic Æsculapius, he transfers it to his

sack. Mr. Mills, or “Brusher,” as he is known among his friends, is a well-known and popular character in the forest, and his services in keeping down the number of adders are considerable. From March to September he ranges the forest, and his largest “bag” was 160 adders in a month. These he boils down, and prepares from their flesh the “adder’s fat,” which he sells. Its virtues have been known for so many centuries, and the favour with which extremely penetrating unguents, such as lanoline, made from the fat of sheep’s wool, are now regarded, justifies the reputation it enjoys. The belief that it is a remedy for the bite of the snake itself may rest on slender grounds. But for the odd list of accidents given by the old man—“sprains, black eyes, poisoning with brass, bites by rats and horses, rheumatic joints, and sore feet in men and dogs,” it is admitted by the general consent of the forest to be a sovereign balm. In winter the Adder-hunter’s occupation is gone, but he has other modes of making a livelihood, and his lodging throughout the year is in the woods, in the snug interior of a charcoal-burner’s hut.

Brockenhurst, unlike Lyndhurst, which, with all its picturesque features, bears itself like a little town, is a true village, imbedded in the forest. Here the ground is stiff clayey loam, suitable for the growth of oaks, and consequently for corn and arable land. The square fields, with hedgerows, which fringe the village give an uneasy sense of limit and confinement after the free and open woodlands. But the cultivated land is a mere patch, lost to sight and memory in a few minutes’ walk from the village. The church stands apart on a little hill, a perfect forest shrine, ringed by a double circle of oaks, between which lie the graves, sprinkled with primroses that have crept out from the wood, and spread their flowers shyly on the church-yard turf. Like the new church of Lyndhurst, the building stands upon a green mount. A giant yew, sound and vigorous, with a solid stem eighteen feet in girth, overshadows the red-brick tower, and reaches halfway up the spire. In front of this tree stand the dead fragments of an oak. The age of this ruin of a tree is almost beyond conjecture, but its position gives some clue to its date. Part of one branch survives. This limb, which appears to be some six feet in diameter, must have passed across the space on which the greater part of the yew now stands, at a height of thirteen feet from the ground. Thus when the ancient



Brockenhurst Church.

Alex Ansted.

yew was a mere shrub, not so high as the great limb of the oak, the latter must have attained its full dimensions ; for the yew is a tree of perfect growth, straight, upright, and unmarred by crowding or shade, which must have been the case had it grown up when the oak-bough was large enough to overshadow it. The shell of the oak measures twenty-five feet



Bridge near Brockenhurst.

round ; and the centuries of the growth of the yew must be the measure of the decline and fall of this primeval oak.

At dusk, when the heavy clouds descend and brood in long lines across the woods, with bars of pale white sky below, the scene between Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst is singularly wild and pleasing. The white and waning light in the west is broken by the sharp outlines of the rugged firs, and reflected in pale sheets in the swampy pools which line the river. The woods are studded with clumps of holly, whose

opaque black outline contrasts with the gnarled and twisted limbs of the ancient pollarded oaks native to this stiff and vigorous soil. As the dusk creeps on the night-sounds of the forest are more distinctly heard. The splashing of the ponies' feet as they crop the grass of the swamps, the neighing of the forest mares as they call their foals, and the distant tinkle of the cattle-bells, sound through the trees, and shadowy forms of deer canter across the rides. Voices of children, calling or crying in the deep wood, are among the startling and unexpected sounds of night in the forest. More than once the writer has left the track and hastened into the grove, only to see the fire of a gipsy camp, with the children and parents lying at the mouth of their tent, lighted and warmed by the glow of their beech-wood fire. The smell of the woods on a still night, when dew is falling, is the essence of a thousand years distilling in the soil of this virgin forest. It baffles description ; suffice it to say, as Herodotus did of Arabia Felix, "from this country comes an odour, wondrous sweet." Nor are true perfumes wanting, where wafts of the scent of sweetbriar come across the path, or an unseen bed of hyacinths fringes the road.

CHAPTER III

THE WILD DEER AND FOREST PONIES

Unique character of hunting in the “High Woods”—Survival of the wild deer—A spring meet at New Park—Rousing deer with tufters—Old Moonstone—Laying on the pack—Full cry in the forest—Number of deer killed—The forest ponies—Their importance to the Commoners—Arab blood—Their feral habits—Improvement and maintenance of the breed—The Pony Show at Lyndhurst.

THE forest was created as a hunting-ground, and such it still remains. The fox is regularly hunted, and the otter-hounds visit Brockenhurst in spring. But the beasts of the chase peculiar to the district are the *wild* red and fallow deer, which are hunted amid settings and surroundings absolutely unique in England.

Their continued existence is one instance in many of the natural survival of what is appropriate to the forest. When the deer were over-preserved by the Crown, their presence led to endless ill-will and demoralisation. From 7,000 to 8,000 head are said to have lived within and about the boundaries of the forest at the end of the last century. Such a stock was far larger than the natural resources of the ground could maintain. In the winter they were partly fed by hay grown for them at New Park. Even so they frequently starved in hard weather, and it is said that in the winter of 1787 three hundred were found dead in one walk. The reaction from this over-preservation went almost as far in the opposite direction. The “Deer Removal Act” was passed in 1851. The greater number were taken in the “toils”—high nets still kept in most deer parks—and most of the rest were shot down by sportsmen. But they have survived all efforts at their

destruction, and their increase in the thick and quiet plantations is now steadily maintained.

Towards the close of the season, late in April, a day with the New Forest deerhounds presents from meet to finish a series of pictures of sylvan sport, in the full glory of the English spring, each of which might be illustrated from the plays of Shakespeare and the old ballad poetry of England. Take for example the scene at a meet late in April of the present year, under the tall oaks at New Park. Three men, born and bred in the forest, sons of woodmen, dressed in brown velveteen, thick boots, and gaiters, were leaning against the oaks. Each wore across his shoulders long thongs of leather, with loops and swivels of steel, working examples of those mysterious ornaments of white and gold with which the Master of the Queen's Buckhounds is girded as he leads the royal procession on the Cup day at Ascot. These are the "couples," for holding the pack, until the time comes to lay them on upon the scent of the deer, which the "tufters" have driven from cover. Three or four red-scarved, black-muzzled forest gipsies strolled up and formed a group under another oak, little dark active laughing orientals, a strange contrast to the sturdy foresters. The old adder-catcher next joined the party ; he had hunted the forest as he came, and flung down upon the ground from his wallet a pair of writhing snakes. The "kennels" are good customers for his adder's fat, as it is believed not only to be useful to reduce sprains and injuries in horse and hound, but also as a remedy against the adder poison should a hound be bitten in the forest. A gipsy family followed, ragged, unkempt, "happy as birds and hard as nails," as a forester described them, taking the meet on their most leisurely way to Brockenhurst. An old woman, the present patriarch of the forest gipsies, led the way, in a cloak of enormous squares of scarlet and black, which covered the basket she carried like a tent, and a poke-bonnet. Another younger woman, in a true "witches' hat" with elf locks hanging from below, and a tribe of most ragged children, sockless, shoeless, some pushing a little cart in which lay their tents, others straying and returning like little wild animals, were amusing themselves by imitating a pack of hounds in full cry. Soon the pack appeared, with huntsman and whips in coats of Lincoln green, and couples across their breasts, and though the hounds

are no longer like those which Theseus bid the forester “uncouple in the western valley,”

“With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook-kneed and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls
Slow in pursuit,”

they are still “matched in mouth like bells,” and their greater speed and symmetry does not detract from the pleasure of listening in the forest to

“The musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction,”

which the hero proposed to Queen Hippolyta. A sharp-faced man “lunging” a forest pony, and one or two mounted woodmen and keepers, completed the party, until the “field” cast up rapidly, the master in Lincoln green, the rest in quiet blacks and browns. The hounds were then divided by the whips into groups, and the couples fastened, each thong being linked to a pair of hounds. Thus one man has to hold from three to six couple, and that picturesque poise of men stepping backwards with arms extended and dragging reluctant hounds which has been painter’s and sculptor’s subject for centuries is reproduced in perfection. One ancient and sagacious hound, by name Moonstone, was omitted from the coupling process. Satisfied that for it the honour was reserved of finding and separating the deer, it trotted alone at the heels of the huntsman’s horse, with an air of sagacity and importance most edifying to behold. After “secret consults” with one or two woodmen, who had marked deers in the early morning, the huntsman led the way through thick and beautiful plantations, the coupled hounds and the field following in long procession. On every side the wood rang with the spring notes of birds, the laugh of the woodpecker, the cry of the cuckoo, while starry beds of violet and primrose, and everywhere the sight and scent of leaves and flowers, made an unusual and beautiful setting to the animated groups of riders, horses, and hounds.

The pack and field halted in a rough common deep in heather and furze, shut in on three sides by plantations, and on the fourth by the ancient timber of Gritnam wood. The huntsman and a mounted keeper, with the old “tufter” Moonstone, then trotted into a large

enclosure on the farther side. "Come on, old dog!" called the huntsman, as the hound stopped to feather on either side of the beautiful green ride up which the two men were trotting. The keeper pulled up his cob, and pointed to a clump of beeches surrounded by low brambles and thorns, remarking, "There were three bucks there this morning." The hound, which had been casting from side to side of the walk and through the cover, now bounded towards the beeches, and with a crash three bucks sprang to their feet, and rushed through the wood, followed by the loud and musical baying of the hound. The deer did not break at once, and there was time to join the groups in the common and watch the dispersion of the inhabitants of the plantation, as the hound twisted and turned after the bucks. A big fox stepped out, and a doe crossed, eliciting a chorus of impatient whimpers from the pack before whose eyes it passed. Then the three bucks crossed the open, followed by the single hound, whose deep voice was heard for many minutes as he drove them through the next covert. A blast on the horn now gave the signal that the deer had separated, and half a dozen willing hands led the coupled hounds to the ancient wood in which they were to be laid upon the scent. The long line of men and hounds, followed by the well-mounted field, hurried along through the long narrow glades of a most beautiful and ancient wood of oaks, or under arcades of crab-blossoms, ragged gipsies, brown-coated foresters, hounds and riders, all gradually hurrying on till the whole cavalcade was pushing at a trot through the forest. A pretty little black-eyed boy was leading old Moonstone (literally by a string). "I likes deer-hunting, though 'tis a cruel sport, for the deer does us no harm," he remarked sententiously, as the procession grouped itself round the huntsman, who was sitting alert and eager on his horse in a green ride at the highest point of the wood, where the single buck had crossed. All the hounds were now eager and happy, with heads up, sterns waving. In a few moments they were uncoupled, and dashed down through the wood. If the scene was not a reproduction of Tudor or Plantagenet days, the picture of the early poets is sadly misread. Hounds, all black, white, and tan, spread fanlike across the forest, flinging to right and left, each giving tongue as it owned the scent; master, huntsman, and whips in Lincoln green, under the lights and branching canopy of most ancient beeches; well-mounted and well-dressed riders, in the costume, sober in

colours, sound in texture, which good taste and good sense have elaborated into the perfection of simplicity, now seen, now lost, as they gallop down the glades, among the tall gray pillars of the beech-trunks, and the gossamer green of little thorns, and bushes of ivy and wild rose. Surely some such scene as this must have been in the mind of the author of the *Allegro*, when he bids the reader

“At his window bid good morrow,
Through the sweetbriar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine.

* * * * *

“Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill.”

A favourite device of a hunted stag in the New Forest is to make for the wood in which other deer are lying, and disturb them, carrying the trail right over their “forms.” The difficulty of keeping hounds together when so composed in a thick extensive plantation is very great, and it often happens that, while the main body of the pack keep to the scent of the hunted deer, small parties of hounds, or even a single hound, break off and enjoy a hunt on their own account. It is on record that on one occasion the pack separated into three, each of which division killed a deer. One doe was hunted and killed by three hounds only, who were found eating the carcass. The single efforts of a staghound which is driving a deer are often extremely interesting, as an example of the perseverance, skill, and instinct combined possessed by the modern breed. On the day the opening of which has been described, a stray hound hunted a buck for a full hour without driving it from one large plantation, giving tongue at intervals, and sticking to the scent without the encouragement either of its own companion or of a single rider. At last, a fine fallow buck, which had not yet shed its horns, broke from the enclosure, and cantered lightly across the open common, ringing twice or thrice round clumps of bushes, and lying down for a few minutes to cool itself, though apparently not at all distressed, in a boggy pool. It then leapt a fence into a plantation. The hound then made its exit from the wood, and took up the scent at a swinging gallop, giving tongue loudly at first, but

soon becoming silent as it reached the scene of the buck's circle round the bushes. At least ten minutes were required to unravel these difficulties ; but the check did not in the least abate the keenness of the hound, who brought the line up to the wood, and then with a fine burst of " music " dashed into the wood, and there pursued its solitary hunt.

Stag-hunting in the forest begins in August, and the meets are held through September, November, December, January, March, April, and part of May, thus covering a considerable period when fox-hunting has either ceased or not begun. Probably the late spring hunting is the most novel and picturesque experience which a day with the New Forest stag-hounds affords. But to those who enjoy the sight of hounds working, and at the same time have a taste for beautiful scenery, nothing could well be more delightful. Last season, sixty days' sport averaged about the same number of deer killed. Blank days are unknown, and there is the certainty of a run and of a day's enjoyment.

The New Forest ponies are one of the most interesting features both of the landscape and the life of this wild country. Now that the deer are so few as to have disappeared from common view, they are replaced on the heaths, the lawns, the bogs, and among the ancient trees by the many-coloured, wild-looking forms of these almost feral ponies. There is scarcely any portion of the forest—the inmost recesses of Mark Ash woods, the sea-girt heaths of Beaulieu, the sodden rim of Matley Bog, or the smooth lawns of Alum Green, of Stonycross, or Brockenhurst—from which the ponies are absent. There is no solitude in which their quiet movements, as they tread with careful steps cropping the scanty herbage, do not break the stillness by day and night, no bare hillside so barren but the ponies can find on it some humble plant to crop between the stones.

The brood mares of the forest are perhaps the nearest approach to the wild horse now existing in this country, so far as their life and habits entitle them to the name. Many of these have run for twenty years in the heaths and woods, unbroken, unshod, and almost without experience of the halter except when " pounded " by the " agisters " for occasional marking. Their graceful walk and elegant shape, their sagacity and hardihood, their speed and endurance, and, not least, the independence and prosperity which their possession confers on the com-

moners and borderers who live in and around the forest, give to these ponies an interest apart from that attached to the life of any other breed of domesticated animal in this country. Nearly all the work done elsewhere by large horses seems to be performed in and around the forest by these miniature ponies, drawing miniature carts. Singly, or driven tandem-fashion, they draw bricks, haul loads of brushwood and poles, trot almost any distance to markets and fairs in carts and gigs, and will carry a heavy forester safely and well

“Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through briar,”

without fatigue or stumble. There is something in the fact of owning horses—be they only ponies—which seems to raise a man in his own esteem, and the jolly foresters have an air and demeanour, whether standing in front of their mud-built cottages, or riding across the heaths to drive in their various stock, which belongs of right to the equestrian order of mankind.

“The love of pony breeding,” writes Mr. W. Moens, of Tweed, near Boldre, one of the most energetic founders of the Association for the Improvement of the Breed of New Forest Ponies, in his pamphlet on the subject, “lies deep in the breasts of most commoners, not only on account of its somewhat speculative nature, but for the animals themselves. The ponies running in the forest are rarely left for long without being looked after to see how they are doing, or at least being inquired after by their owners, of those living near or working in the forest. Even the very children of borderers know to whom the mares and foals belong, so that the forest ponies afford much amusement to the forest folk, and nothing more easily excites them than a rumour that something or other is about to be done that may injure their interests as regards their pony stock. Some of the large breeders own as many as one hundred or more ponies, many forty or fifty, the smaller occupiers own as many as they can keep in the winter season. These, according to the fancy of the owners, are distributed in various parts of the forest, where they are marked by the agisters, or marksmen, by cutting the hairs of the tails in various ways. Thus the ponies haunting each quarter of the forest are known, the agister comparing his own marks with those made by the owner, and with his description of his ponies. Should any ponies

The Forest Ponies.



stray into the parks, other pastures, or the lanes around the forest, information given to one of the agisters causes it to be soon known to whom the straying ponies, which go by the name of ‘lane-haunters,’ belong.”

The present system of identification has taken the place of a far more picturesque and exciting method of marking the stock, the “Drift of the Forest.” This custom was a survival of an Act of Henry VIII., which ordained that all forests and chases were to be driven yearly within fifteen days after Michaelmas, and if any mares or fillies were found which were not likely to bear good foals “the same unprofitable beasts were to be killed and buried.” Long after this drastic command had ceased to be regarded, the “Drift” was maintained, as a kind of census for the marking of all forest stock. As nearly as possible on the same day, keepers, agisters, and owners rode out to drive the different walks of the forest towards the pounds. These were not necessarily railed enclosures. The forest hardly contained a fence in the old days, and where, round the few villages, the roads were bordered by fences, the space between was ingeniously used as a trap. At Brockenhurst, for instance, the foals, ponies, cattle, calves, and donkeys were forced towards the lane which, with its high hedges, runs by the side of Brockenhurst Manor towards Beaulieu. Once past the manor mill, by the Boldre River, the gate across the road was shut, and the long lane was filled from end to end with a promiscuous throng of wild and tame beasts, thrusting, neighing, bellowing, and crowding, like the spoils of Amalek. From ten to twenty men would join in the work of collecting the animals from the open forest. This needed both skill and knowledge to perform properly. The wilder ponies, who had unpleasant recollections of branding and other rough handling in the pounds, would often make a determined effort to break back, taking their way at speed through the most difficult and treacherous ground. There too, as in the runs of New South Wales, the animals which have been ridden in the business before seemed to take a pleasure in aiding to secure the wild ones, and the most successful means to bring in a fugitive was often for the rider to sit still, and leave the pony he rode to choose its own line, and the time for making the last push which turned the other back to the herd.

The history of these New Forest ponies is by no means ascertained.

They are not an indigenous animal like the red deer, but the uniformity in size and appearance suggests a common stock and ancestry. The first is, however, probably due to the almost feral state in which these ponies live in the wild district, from which their food-supply is entirely obtained. No pony above a certain size is likely to survive in the forest, for the simple reason that it cannot find food to maintain it. In winter, by browsing all day and the greater part of the night, hardy little "foresters" of from twelve to thirteen hands high can just make both ends meet, though they are extremely thin and ragged. But anything much above that size would need artificial support, and its progeny would deteriorate. On the other hand, their size does not tend to fall much *below* the standard at which Nature sets the limit, which, in the case of the New Forest pony, seems to be from twelve to thirteen and a half hands. The natural appetite and needs of these hardy creatures prompt them to do the best for themselves from day to day with a constancy hardly to be understood by human beings whose minds are not concentrated by necessity on the absorbing effort to satisfy the hourly cravings of hunger. Nature levels up as it levels down, and this is probably the clue to the uniformity in size of all wild animals, as well as of these half-wild ponies.

The condition of this stability is of course that man interferes nowhere. But the practice of selecting and selling away from the forest all the best of the ponies did threaten a marked deterioration in the stock about ten years ago, not only in size but in quality. Now the "quality" of the ponies is obvious and unmistakable. They have none of that lumpiness and want of due proportion so often seen in ponies; on the contrary, they are far more like miniature horses, and horses with a strain of Arab blood in them, as their fine eye, small heads, and high quarters show. Whatever the origin of the ponies in the past, this high-bred appearance *has* a history, and a very interesting one. They are of the blood of Eclipse, or rather of his sire, supplemented in later years by Arab strains of historical excellence.

The story of the Arab strain in these ponies is mixed up with one of the earliest romances of the modern thoroughbred. The Duke of Cumberland, son of George II., who in his later years became Ranger of the New Forest, exchanged an Arabian horse for a Yorkshire thorough-

bred, which he called Mask, after the place from which it came. Mask was descended from the Darley Arab, brought from Aleppo in the time of Queen Anne, and from the Byerly Turk, thus possessing a pedigree going back to the days of Charles I. Mask was, however, sold for a small sum at the death of the Duke, and remained for some years in the neighbourhood of the New Forest, where he became the sire of numbers of forest ponies, and also of the celebrated Eclipse. Recently the Queen sent to the forest two thoroughbred Arabs—Abegan and Yirassan—the former a gift of the Imaum of Muscat. Lastly, in 1891, the Association for the Improvement of the Breed of New Forest Ponies was founded at Lyndhurst, which holds an annual show of pony sires, and grants premiums to such as come up to the standard required, on condition that they are allowed to run in the forest. This pony show is one of the prettiest sights of the forest year. It is held annually at the end of April, just as the leaves are appearing on the beeches and thorns, not in some formal show-yard in a town, but on a lovely lawn outside Lyndhurst, called Swan Green.

The beauty of this little sylvan theatre has already been described as the first scene in the forest which presents itself on the way to Mark Ash from Lyndhurst town. The scene at the spring pony show in the present year was a busy contrast to the ordinary quiet of the little green. In these country gatherings the puzzle is to know where the people come from and how they get there. It had been pouring with rain all the morning, and the grove beyond the green was dripping with sunlit showers of drops. Yet a large part of the forest population seemed to be present. Under an oak on the hillside a white pony, saddled but riderless, was cropping the leaves from a thorn-bush, in company with four or five sooty, ragged, wet, long-tailed colts, dragged in from the forest. Smart well-groomed pony stallions were showing off their paces on the road on either side. In the centre a ring of about an acre had been enclosed with hurdles, within which were the ponies, their owners, or leaders, and the judges; and around, in the every-day dress of working life, the men and boys of the forest. "Wild ponies and wild people" was the remark of a bystander. But the roughness of the forester only extends to costume; his manners are nearly always prepossessing, and his conversation, on topics in which like that of pony-

breeding, he is an authority, is as brisk and epigrammatic as that of a farmer in the Yorkshire dales. Smart people in breeches and gaiters, old foresters with faces rugged as their oaks, short black-eyed "gippos" prying and peeping between the broad shoulders of the native race, and all the school children of Lyndhurst, were grouped round the ring. Within it, the ponies were being led round in procession before the judges, who, notebook in hand, were marking the merits and defects of each. A curly-headed sweep headed the troop, carrying, instead of a whip, his soot-brush, with which he occasionally whacked his handsome rough pony, a piece of "effect," which had evidently been carefully thought out beforehand. Most of their ponies had spent the whole of the last trying season in the forest, and showed evident signs of the privations they had undergone. Many had their rough coats still almost unshed. This produces a curious effect, for though the forest ponies are of all known colours, the masses of unkempt, shaggy winter coat, which cling to them, are of colours quite unknown to the eye which only sees groomed horses, or those which have been out at grass for a few months in a meadow. All sorts of shades of soot-colour, sand-colour, dusty brown, smoky gray, lie in rags and tatters on their flanks, colours which alter again when, as in the present case, the mop-like mass is drenched with wet, or drying in the sun. Yet the quality of the race shows in the fine head, and large eye, and above all, when they begin to move. Unshod, and untrained, they step with all the careless freedom of a race-horse, giving that curious impression of moving *in detail*, which the shuffling jog of a coarse bred pony never creates. The contrast between the animals towed in by halters, with the mud of the bog still clinging to their flanks, and their civilised relations "in service," is perhaps the most striking feature of the show. But the condition in which the true forest pony appears after his winter in the open, is an excellent guide to the size, points and quality necessary for combining the maximum of speed and strength, with the power to endure the hard life in which they are born and bred ; and the judges seem to grasp the "true inwardness" of each pony's merits through any depth of matted hair and mud, and in spite of any want of flesh between hide and bones. The privations of the last season fell heavily on all grazing stock, whether semi-wild, or kept upon the farms. Yet it was remarked that ponies left to run wild in the forest did better during the long drought

than those which were “taken up” and put into pastures on inclosed land. They got into the recesses of the bogs and swamps, and there found more food and better, than was available on the burnt-up meadows of the farms. These ponies must in fact be judged in the first place from their power to exist as wild animals : the other qualities follow.

The old saying that “a good horse is never a bad colour,” seems true of these “Foresters.” In the endless circle moving round the ring, there was as much difference in the colour of the animals as in the appearance of the men and boys who led, hauled, or *pushed* them round. On the whole blacks and roans seemed the most numerous. Of seventy animals in the ring at one time, thirty were either roans, grays or blacks. As for the two-year-olds, wild little fellows fresh from the forest, awkward, reluctant, shaggy, and “pixie-ridden” to the last degree, their colours were so obscured by long hair and wet, that blacks, browns, and bays seemed all shrouded in a dingy earth colour. But all walked with freedom and grace, and most would probably have fetched from £7 to £12 as they stood. It is said that the yearlings if removed to the good pastures of Sussex, Dorset, or Somerset, will grow a hand taller than their dams.

It must not be supposed, from the rough and poor condition of these creatures when seen in April, after exposure to the long hard winter, that their life is uniformly one of privation and hardship. The health and freedom which they enjoy together make them on the whole a very happy and contented race. During the summer each sire collects his little troop of mares, and so far as possible keeps them from the approach of any rival. In the spring when the foals are born, there are few prettier sights than the little mares and their young, which they then bring into the most sheltered and beautiful lawns near that part of the forest which they haunt. Later in the year, when the sun is hot and the midge and forest fly—perhaps the greatest pest to horses which exists in England, begin to worry them in the thick cover and low ground, ponies and cattle alike leave the low ground at about 9 a.m., and until the afternoon frequent the “shades” or open ground where they stand close together half asleep, swishing off the flies with their long tails. The accurate observer, whose work has been quoted previously, thinks that these shades are chosen according to the prevailing wind, “sometimes being chosen in the full sun, where the summer breeze is better felt than in the surrounding

bottoms ; at other times they will stand in a favourite part of some forest stream, or in a drift away over the railway. Blackdown is a favourite shade, being a ridge surrounded by bottoms, where there is plenty of good feed in the driest summers, with abundance of food and water. This district is perhaps the most favoured of any, being haunted by over 600 ponies and cattle, or more than one-tenth of the whole stock run in the forest.” This was the district which it was proposed to take as a military rifle range, a proposal which was successfully resisted largely on the ground that the ponies would thus lose their favourite summer haunt.

CHAPTER IV

THE NORTHERN FOREST

Stony Cross—Rufus Stone and the Rufus Legend—A brief for the prosecution of Sir Walter Tyrrell—The view from Stony-Cross Plain—Bramshaw Wood—Malwood—Minstead and its park.

THE great ridge of Stony-Cross Plain divides the northern from the central forest. Along it runs the ancient road from Winchester to Ringwood, and thence to the port of Poole. From its summit the whole of the forest, north, south, and east, is seen in endless waves of woods ; and in the deep glen below its eastern shoulder is the spot where Rufus was killed by the arrow of Sir Walter Tyrrell on the evening of the second of August, A.D. 1100. In the monkish stories the death of Rufus became a text, not for the vengeance which comes on the despoiler of the poor, as in the case of the death of the Conqueror's other children on the scene of their father's oppressions, but of the vengeance of God upon the robber of the Church. The fate of the brutal scoffer who mocked at the holy saints, who kept abbeys without their abbots, sees without their bishops, and the very throne of Canterbury itself vacant for three years while he fattened on the incomes of the servants of God, is the theme of ecclesiastical story. It was almost inevitable that this colour should be put on the sudden death of the spoiler by zealous Churchmen. Those who see in the denunciations of the Church, and in the prophecies of an impending requital which were in circulation up to the day of Rufus's death, a motive, which alters the part of Tyrrell from the unconscious instrument to the secret emissary of vengeance, will find some curious circumstantial evidence in an examina-

tion of the spot in which the king's body was found, assuming that that now marked as the place where Rufus fell is rightly identified. There is good reason for thinking that in spite of the lapse of time, tradition in this respect is right. The place is close to Malwood, where the king was lodging the night before, and had dined and drunk on the very day of his death.

Malwood has for centuries, probably from the days of Rufus, been the residence of men whose business has been to know and visit every part of the forest in that particular "walk." Those in the house at the time of the king's death must have had knowledge of the spot where the body was found. Even if Purkiss, the charcoal-burner, who drove it in his cart to Winchester, did not mention to the other foresters the scene of so dreadful a discovery, it is almost certain that after the dispersion of the party at the lodge, the flight of Tyrrell, and the desperate ride of Henry to Winchester, in order to seize the succession to the Crown with the blessings of the Church, which had banned his brother, the domestics must have stolen down the hill to look at the body where it lay. The death of princes, even if not followed by the appearance of the caladrus, the ill-omened bird, which, according to the monkish bestiaries, only appeared on earth to bring news of the death of kings, must always be a topic of awe and curiosity to those near the scene, even if fear closes their mouths and prevents them from paying due reverence to the body. The murder of Absalom the beautiful in the wood of Ephraim was known to more than the "captains of the host," though they dissembled all knowledge of the deed. The descendants of the charcoal-burner, who carried the body to Winchester, enjoyed for centuries the rights given them as a reward, among others that of taking all such wood as they could gather "by hook or by crook," dead branches, that is, which have not yet fallen, but might be broken off, though not lopped by axe or bill. Thus the evidence as to the exact place of the king's death does not depend on history, or upon general tradition. It is fixed by a concurrent and very coherent though independent set of circumstances. In the first place by the fact which we have glanced at, that by the fixed and unchanging order of the forest there have lived in continued succession, within ten minutes' ride of the place, persons employed for eight hundred years to traverse daily that particular part of the forest, Malwood

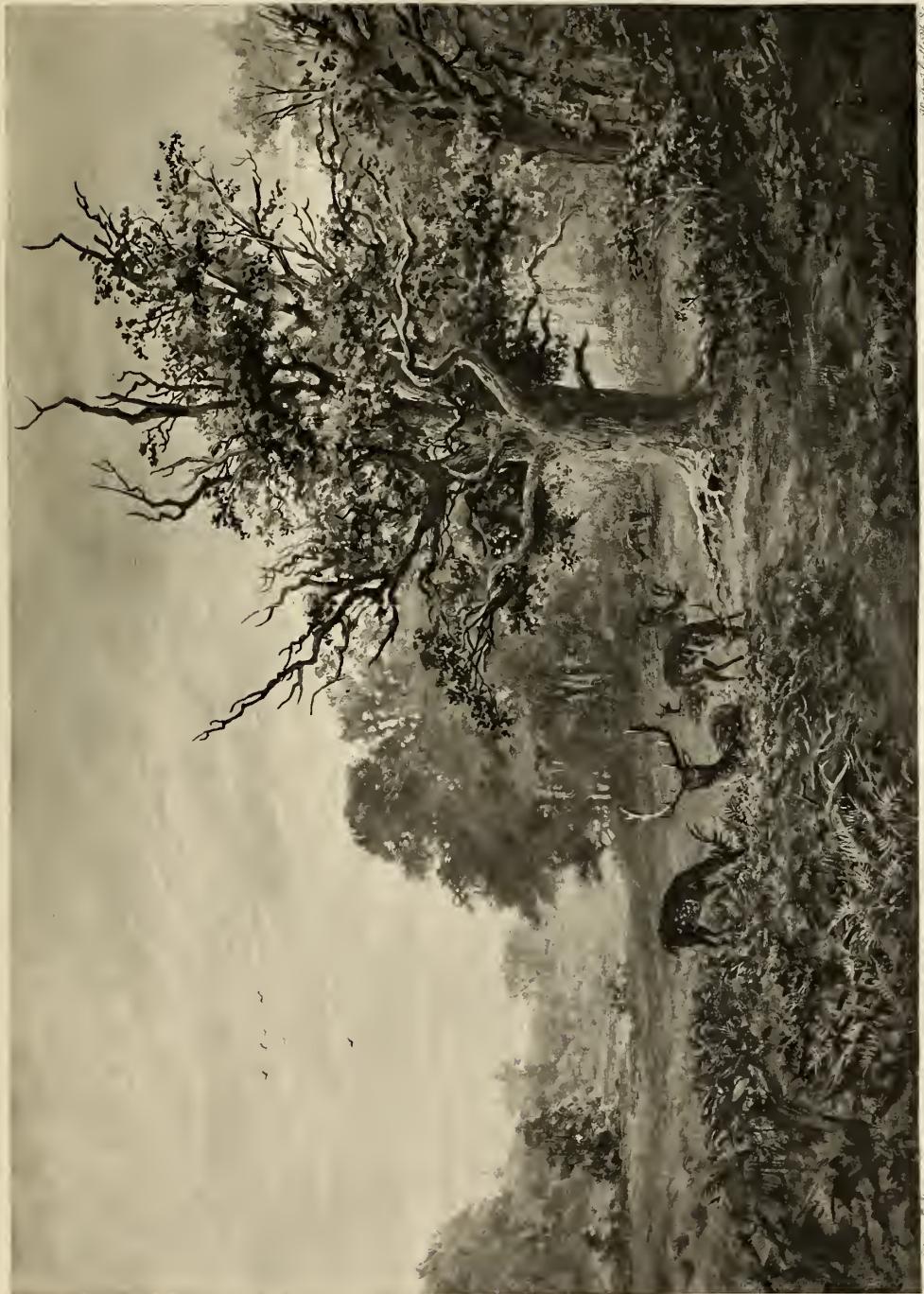
Walk, in the exercise of the same duty, the supervision of the deer and the wood, men to whom by the very nature of their business every tree, rivulet, and pool is a familiar object, frequently associated with some fact, far less important, such as the death of an eagle, or the leap of a deer, which is a part of the ordinary knowledge of the wood transmitted from one generation of foresters to the next. Secondly, the spot originally marked by an oak tree, was again marked by a stone, set up by Lord Delaware, then warden of the forest, in 1745, which stone was afterwards cased in iron in 1841. If the tree which in 1745 was in such a state of decay that its place was taken by the stone, was the same which was standing at the time of Rufus's death, it must have been more than 650 years old at the time of its total disappearance—not an impossible age by any means, for the fragment in Brockenhurst churchyard probably stood there quite as early, and Gilpin speaks of "a few venerable oaks in the New Forest that chronicle upon their furrowed trunks ages before the Conquest." But the tree may have been a shoot, or sapling or seedling, of the original oak, and still have identified the spot, just as the present "Cadenham oak," which buds at Christmas, marks the site of the old tree.

Taking these considerations as adequate to maintain the truth of tradition as to the exact spot at which the king died, the inferences from an examination of the ground are as follows. The king was shot, not *in* the wood, but at the very edge, almost at the last tree. Immediately west of "Rufus Stone" the good soil stops, and a very poor, steep, marshy, slope begins, which runs right up to the top of the hill by Stony Cross. Wood does not grow on it now, and never could have grown, for the nature of the soil has not changed, and remains in the same condition for the growth or non-growth of timber, as in the days of the Conquest. Again, the legend says that the king was looking after a wounded deer, "shading his eyes with his hand." Now he would not have needed to shade his eyes had he been in the thick forest, though as the deer would naturally run out of the wood across the open, and the sun was in the west, for it was late on an August day, the account exactly fits the supposition that William was standing where he is said to have stood and gazing after the wounded deer, as it ran out across the Stony-Cross Common, when he received

Watson Collection Sc.

Rufus Glade in the Old Forest.

Unexecuted Specimen.



the fatal arrow. William, then, was in the open, or on the very edge of the wood. That he should have been shot by accident in such a place, with a weapon like a bow, seems most improbable. Moreover it is likely that both he and Tyrrell were waiting for deer to be *driven* to them. The place is still a natural pass for deer, and the "Rufus" Stone stands on the neck of a little bluff, on either side of which driven deer would naturally pass on their way up the valley, and up which they do pass now when hunted. Supposing Rufus to have turned and shot one, his back or side would be presented to the man who was guarding the other pass below the knoll. On the other hand it was a place which gave admirable opportunities for the escape of an assassin. Just above, or over Stony-Cross Plain ran the sound road, along the high open ridges, straight across the north of the forest, not to Lymington or Beaulieu, which would probably be ports friendly to the king whose property the forest was, but across the Avon, out of the reach of summary forest law, down to Poole, whence ships were constantly passing over the Channel for Normandy. The course which Tyrrell is said to have taken fits exactly with the theory that he committed the murder here, with the intention of instant flight by this convenient road. The story runs that he rode to the Avon at the spot still called Tyrrell's Ford, and, there after forcing the smith to shoe his horse with the shoes reversed, killed the man, that he might not betray him. A yearly fine paid by the owners of the house where he crossed at what is still called Tyrrell's ford, is said to record the memory of the passage. Whether this legend be true in detail or not, it seems agreed that Tyrrell did escape from Poole to Normandy, and that there, after giving to Abbot Suger his account of the king's death in which he claimed that it was accidental, took the unusual step—for a man with a guiltless conscience—of making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in performing which he died.

The view from the height of Stony Cross Plain, which was the scene of Tyrrell's Ride, gives perhaps the best idea of the extent of the forest and its relation to the splendid country which surrounds it. Along the back of the ridge, on the high firm ground, the ancient road runs from Cadenham, where it is joined by the main roads from Winchester and Southampton, straight across the forest, to Ringwood. This northern ridge is almost the highest land in the forest. Beyond it, far to the

south, the whole district falls away to the Solent, beyond which the hills of the Isle of Wight are distinctly seen. This "prospect" of the forest has nothing of the chess-board appearance, usual in extensive views in southern England. Right away to the sea-shore the eye sees nothing but woods, commons, and heaths, not in squares and patches, but in a succession of long ridges which seem to run out from right to left from a shoulder of higher land to the west. Lyndhurst spire shoots up in the centre, Minslead, Bolderwood, Rhinefield, Wilverly, and Christchurch bound it on the west. Eastward, the eye ranges across Southampton Water to the long line of woods, and faintly seen white houses near Netley Abbey, and the old fortress of Calshot Castle. Thus the whole southern forest is within sight, with its natural and ancient boundaries of the Avon Valley, Southampton Water, and the Solent.

Looking backwards, north and north-east, the Wiltshire Downs are seen, and to the right the chalk hills beyond Romsey, abutting on Winchester. The two great cities of Wessex, Winchester and Salisbury, here have joint claims upon the forest. Timber for the roofing of Salisbury was cut in Bramshaw Wood, where it abuts on Wiltshire, and adjacent are the lands of the wardens of Winchester College. Days might be spent in gazing on this magnificent panorama, without exhausting its beauties. Across the valley to the north, at the deepest point of which Rufus met his death, the beautiful beech woods of Eyeworth Walk and Bramble Hill are spread on the slope like curly fleeces. As the day goes on, the cattle come trooping up from the woods to seek relief from the forest flies on the open "shade" in front of the inn, and the air is resonant with the music of their bells.

Malwood, where stood the house in which Rufus lay the night before his death, and where till the present generation, the keeper of Malwood Walk had his lodge, is the eastern buttress of this high Stony-Cross Ridge. Sir William Vernon Harcourt's beautiful house now stands on the site; long, low, timbered and gabled, it is perhaps the most pleasing of the many new mansions which now stand on sites leased from the Crown on the ground once occupied by the old lodges. Between Malwood and Lyndhurst lies the beautiful village and park of Minslead. It is difficult to account for the change which the barrier of a paling makes in the general aspect of trees and herbage within and without.

The park was clearly taken from the forest, yet every blade of grass seems different, and every tree has a "domesticated" look. Probably this is due to the work of the scythe on the one, and of the inevitable tendency to improve on nature in the other. Outside, in the forest, the grass has never been mown, and constantly browsed and trampled by cattle. The trees have never been lopped, except as the wind tore off the rotten branches. Thus the grass of the forest is like a bowling alley set with flowers, the grass of the park, the common and cultivated verdure of the hayfield. The positive contribution of the park to the forest landscape is in the number of trees of species not indigenous to the forest, which are properly planted round great houses. Thus at Minstead Manor the long drive is fringed by masses of rhododendron twenty feet high. Their blaze of red flower on the dark-green background of shining leafage, the yellow clusters of azalea, and the few gigantic araucarias, which rise from the mass below without a single dead branch, make a beautiful incident in the midst of the natural forest. The fine mansion, and ancient and picturesque stables and offices, the kennels and gardens bowered in this mass of exotic shrubbery, with all the evidences of ancient and distinguished inhabitation suggest a train of thought different from, but not out of harmony with, that which arises in the contemplation of the natural woods.

CHAPTER V

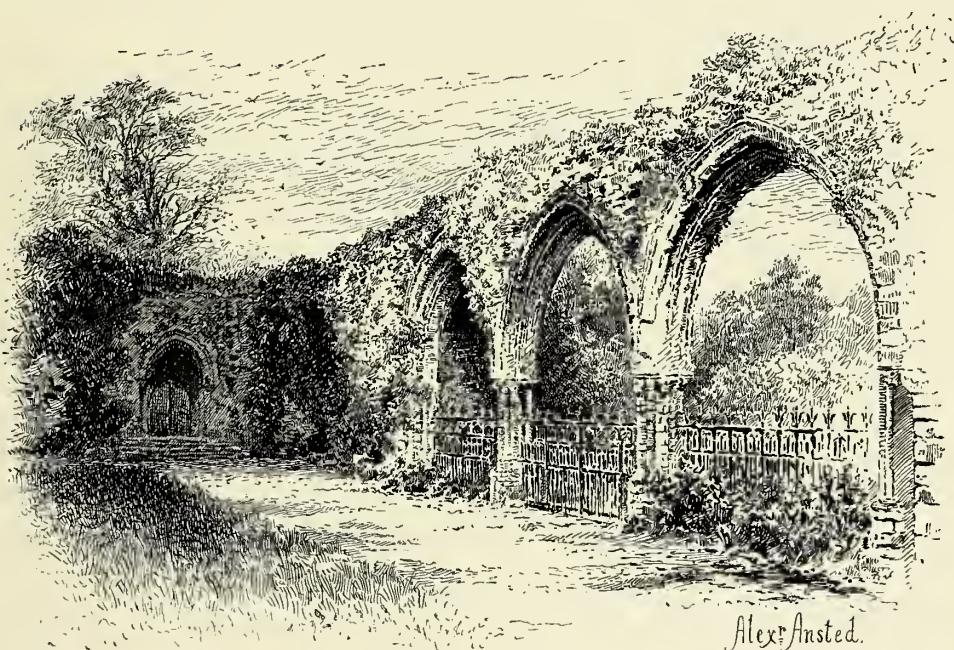
THE SOUTHERN FOREST AND BEAULIEU

Beaulieu Abbey and its history—The ruins at St. Leonard's—The Solent shore—Cobbett's admiration of the view—Sowley Pond—Wild-fowl—The Beaulieu river and Buckler's Hard—Nelson's flagship built in the forest—Commoners and squatters—Their houses at Hill Top—Forest rights—Pigs and pannage—Swineherds—Rights of fuel—Future of the forest.

IN the purview of the forest the great and ancient domain of Beaulieu claims separate and unique consideration. Geographically it is the riverine and maritime district of the forest, in which the Abbey of Beaulieu itself, at the head of its tidal river, marks the point of connection between the inland portions and the beautiful Solent shore. It was part of the original forest of William the Conqueror, and might have remained like the rest of the great hunting-ground, a wild and sparsely populated region, whose main interest to the modern world is that the changes, which make history, have been so little felt that in its present condition it hardly invites historical inquiry, because it presents itself almost unchanged by centuries, as a fossil fact.

The act of King John in granting this magnificent domain for the support of an abbey of Cistercians, withdrew it at once and for ever from the deadening, though conservative, influence of the forest law, and from that moment Beaulieu has a separate and dignified history, the human interest of which exceeds that of the forest itself. The resources and splendour of this domain are such that it has, from the appointment of its first abbot until the present time, maintained its position as an *imperium in imperio* through all the tumults of history. It is of vast extent, yet the boundaries of the Manor Bank have never been broken or

encroached upon. Backed by the forest and bounded by the sea, fertile in corn, in wine—the remains of its terraced vineyards and the house of the winepress still survive—and inclosing nearly the whole of a splendid tidal river, it could exist as an independent whole, alike in beauty, position, and natural resources. Whether in mortmain—the “dead hand” of the Church—or in private possession, its resources have been consecutively in the power of a single owner, who has enjoyed a prestige



Alex^r Ansted.

Beaulieu Abbey.

from its possession such as is not conferred by any domain of similar extent. The privileges granted to the abbots by King John, and confirmed by charter after charter of his successors, were at least equal to those enjoyed by the kings themselves, when the manor was part of their forest. The abbey enjoyed every ordinary forest right, and some which were exceptional; the abbots might hunt within the manor and follow their game into the forest a bowshot beyond its boundaries; their hounds were excepted from the provisions as to mutilation if found in the forest, and to this day the manor shares with only one other, that of Brocken-

hurst, the privilege of feeding sheep in the forest. The Prince Abbots of Beaulieu sat among the Lords spiritual in Parliament for 200 years, and after the confiscation of their estates the prestige of the possession of the manor seems never to have failed to confer upon its owners the dignity of a peerage, or a step in rank on those who already enjoyed it. In 1538 Sir Thomas Wriothesley, Lord High Chancellor, bought the entire manor, then worth £428 6s. 8d. a year, making, according to Cobbett's estimate, £8,500 of our money, for £2,000. He was created Earl of Southampton. In the reign of William III. Ralph, Lord Montagu, married the heiress of the Earl of Southampton, and was created Duke of Montagu. Edward Hussey, who married one of the co-heiresses of John Duke of Montagu, was created an earl—Earl of Beaulieu. At this time the manor was for one life divided, for the other daughter of John Duke of Montagu married the Duke George her cousin. She left a daughter, and the Earl of Beaulieu dying without children, the estate passed to this daughter, who married the Duke of Buccleuch. The great-grandson of that Duke, Lord Henry Scott, became possessor of Beaulieu, and was created Baron Montagu in 1887. Thus the possession of Beaulieu seems to carry with it a patent of nobility as well as the enjoyment of one of the most beautiful estates in England.

The history of the abbey is perhaps as good an example as can be found of the magnificence, method, and good sense with which these great foundations were projected, developed, and maintained. The story which attributes the original grant to a fit of superstitious remorse, may or may not be founded on fact ; if it is, the subsequent record of the use made of the gift is in strange contrast to its inception. The tale is that the king summoned the abbots of the white-robed Cistercians to meet him at Lincoln, and that enraged at their hostility to himself, he ordered them to be trampled to death by wild horses. His soldiers refused to become executioners, and the abbots fled. Next morning the king confided to his confessor that he had dreamt during the night that he had been brought up for judgment before St. Peter, who had handed him over to the abbots to be beaten, and that he was still aching from the blows. The confessor induced him to apologise to the abbots, and to make reparation by founding an abbey of Cistercians at Beaulieu.

There is no need of this legend to account for John's anxiety to have

at least one body of powerful and well-affected ecclesiastics on his side. From the time of this great gift the Cistercians remained loyal to the king, even against the orders of the Pope himself; and even during the interdict, when the whole realm lay under the Papal ban, as the result of John's quarrel with Rome, these English Cistercians celebrated Divine service at the command of their abbots, for which they were excommunicated by Innocent III. The king restored to them their lands which had been seized on account of the interdict, and at the fourth Lateran council held at Rome in the year 1215, at which were present 312 bishops, and more than 200 abbots and priors, the abbot of Beaulieu, on behalf of King John, impeached Archbishop Langton of high treason for his share in the direction of the barons' revolt. The founding of Beaulieu was a piece of policy on the part of the king, the reason for which is sufficiently clear by its results. But the magnificence of its development was partly due to fortune. The piety of John's son, Henry III., enriched it for conscience' sake; one of his numerous grants was that of the profits of three years from his stud of horses in the forest, to pay for masses for his father's soul. In his reign the abbey church was completed, and the greater part of the buildings in the precinct were either projected or begun. The church was as large as that of Romsey; but though the lines of its foundations have been traced, and are kept in evidence with the same care which is bestowed on the preservation of each and every portion of the ruins, the building itself has disappeared. It is hard to conceive a greater shock to religious sentiment than the ruthless destruction of this abbey church, while all that was useful for secular purposes was retained; the barns and cellars kept for the storage of the wealth which the land still yielded to its new owner, the stones of the house of God taken to build Hurst Castle, and the lead of its roof to cover the towers of the sister fortress at Calshot.

The buildings which remain are still among the most beautiful ruins of the south, and serve to show the scale on which the abbey was conceived; and the wisdom which dictated the choice of its site. They lie on a gently sloping meadow, in which the great wall of the precinct stands here and there in gray masses, marking the lines of an inclosure a mile and a quarter round. The mass of the buildings, the church, the cloisters, the abbot's house, the guest house, and last but not least, the

means and appliances which converted into wealth the commodities which fed the colony, stood close to the very head of the tidal river. There were the mill, the storehouses, and a quay, to which the ships from France, Spain and the Hanse towns came as the natural port of what was at once an outlet for the trade of the forest, and the seat of a great industrial community. Part of this quay is submerged; but part remains

covered with grass and flowers; and this quiet, butterfly-haunted spot is still called Cheapside. Opposite and abutting on this quay are the ruins of the abbey, and the beautiful "Palace House," the centre of which is the lofty "Gate House" of the abbey, while round it the buildings of a modern mansion are grouped with such skill that the house forms a whole as completely adapted to its setting and surroundings as the abbey itself. Within the great wall of the precinct are the refectory, now converted into the parish church, and the remains of the exquisite cloister court, of the chapter house, and of a huge chamber, still in good repair, in which the guests of the abbey were housed. This last is a good example of the simple, large-minded way in which the monks set to work to build for ordinary purposes. They built two



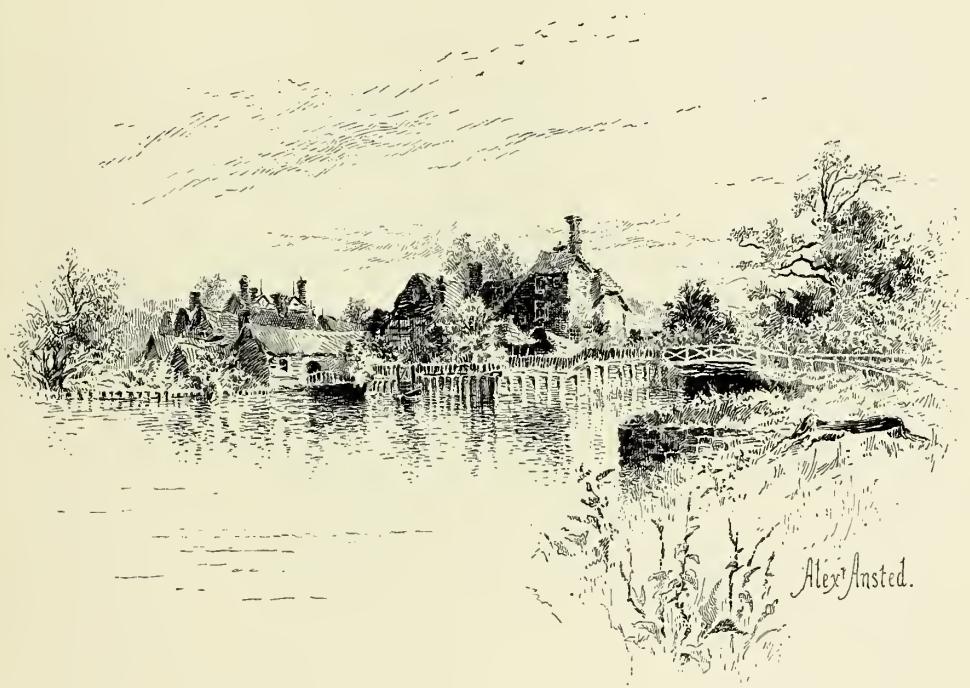
A.A.

Gate House, Beaulieu.

gable ends as wide as they had space for, or where space was no object, as wide as the forest oaks would give them cross-beams for their roof. Then they joined their ends by straight thick walls pierced with windows, thick and massive with no need for buttresses or contrivances to eke out bad workmanship or save expense. There are several remains of their great storehouses, a wine-store, and a gable sixty feet wide at the

abbey, and at St. Leonard's, a branch colony nearer to the Solent is probably the largest building of its kind existing. In the ruins of the abbey there are enough relics of interest to give material for days of minute inquiry.

It is hard to understand why Cobbett, whose eye for scenery, and admiration for the great religious foundations destroyed by Henry VIII., might have been expected to make him view with sympathy and appreciation, a scene in which two such elements of interest are combined, is



Beaulieu.

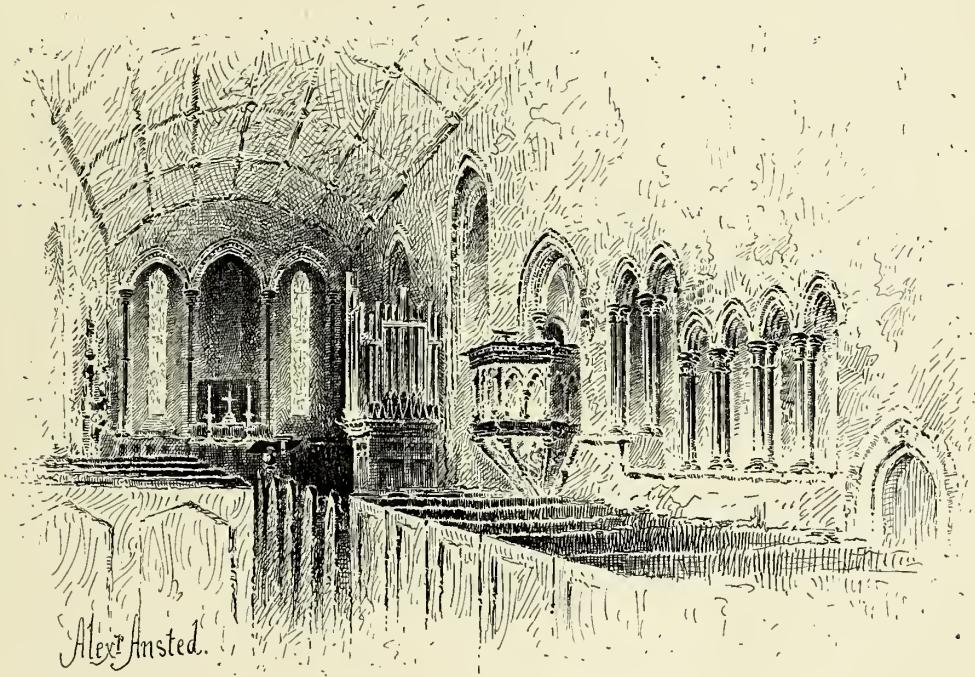
rather cold in his praises of Beaulieu. "The abbey," he writes in his *Ride from Lyndhurst to Godalming*, "is not situated in a very fine place. The situation is low; the lands above it rather a swamp than otherwise"—he must mean the lands higher up the stream, for the slopes above the abbey were the ancient site of vineyards, and necessarily dry and sunny—"pretty enough altogether," he continues, "but by no means a fine place." Few people will be inclined to assent to this. As a site for the colony for which it was chosen Beaulieu is almost perfect. The lake

above and the river below, meadows so rich that the elms grow there to a size which rivals the forest oaks, the background of magnificent woods which run back for a mile to the crest of the great plain of Beaulieu Heath which lies above, give an air of propriety and richness to the surroundings of the abbey for which it would be difficult to find a parallel elsewhere. The view of the whole, looking up the river, the natural approach at a time when the forest was a trackless half-desert region, towards the abbey, the bridge, and the little cluster of houses and the mill which overhung the dark pool below the river, made it as fine a place to *look at*, which we take to be the meaning of Beaulieu, as could be desired, and one of the most beautiful heads of an estuary which can be found in England.¹ Cobbett, however, had seen another part of the ancient domain of the abbey before spending any time at Beaulieu itself, a place which he declared to have impressed him far more favourably. Neither Cobbett's conclusions, nor, so far as modern authority goes, his archæology, seems quite consonant with facts. But the accident which took him past Beaulieu to the ruins at "St. Leonard's," led incidentally to a description of that unrivalled view from the maritime side of the monks' domain, which is well worth quoting. "Happening to meet a man before I got into the village, I, pointing with my whip across towards the abbey said to the man, 'I suppose there is a bridge down here to get across to the abbey.' 'That's not the abbey, sir,' says he. 'The abbey is about four miles further on.' Having chapter and verse for it I pushed on towards farmer John Biel's. When I got there I really thought at first that this must have been the site of the abbey of Beaulieu; because the name meaning *fine place*, this was a thousand times finer place than that where the abbey, as I afterwards found, really stood. After looking about for some time, I was satisfied that it had not been an abbey; but the place is one of the finest that ever was seen in this world. It stands at about half-a-mile distance from the water's edge at high-water mark, and at about the middle of the space along the coast from Calshot Castle to Lymington Haven. To the right you see Hurst Castle and that narrow passage called the Needles: and to the left you see Spithead, and all the ships that are sailing or lie anywhere opposite

¹ A good inn, the Montagu Arms, with modern comfort and old prices, must be counted among the attractions of Beaulieu.

Portsmouth. The Isle of Wight is right before you, and you have in view at one and the same time, the towns of Yarmouth, Newtown, Cowes, and Newport, with all the beautiful fields of the island, lying upon the side of a great bank before and going up the ridge of hills in the middle of the island.

“The ruins consist of part of the walls of a building about 200 feet long and 40 wide. It has been turned into a barn, in part, and the rest



Interior of Beaulieu Church.

into cattle-sheds. But there is another ruin, which was a church or chapel, and stands very near to the farm-house. This little church or chapel appears to have been a very beautiful building. A part only of its walls are standing, but you see, by what remains of the arches, that it was finished in a manner the most elegant and expensive of the day in which it was built. Part of the outside of the building is now surrounded by the farmer's garden. The interior is partly a pig-stye, partly a goose-pen.”

Cobbett declared these ruins to have been once the hospital of Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Modern authorities say that it was a branch establishment of the Beaulieu monks, containing their enormous granary, a chapel, and the lodging for the workers of iron at Sowley, and of the salt-pits on the shore. Everything remains as it was in Cobbett's time except that the last of the race of John Biel has departed from the farm. But the beautiful little chapel is no longer a goose-pen, but covered, floor, walls, and windows, with a wonderful growth of plants and weeds. It abuts on the garden of the farm, a handsome solid old house with low comfortable rooms and a row of dormer windows in the roof. Both gables of the chapel stand, and the remains of rich niches and carved work peep out from the ivy and trailing plants. Flowers blossom all over these walls, roses, cranesbill, yellow barberry in masses, bramble-blossoms, odd garden herbs, fennel and rue, yellow mustard, honesty, and beds of "burrs" and pink nettle. It is a perfect sun-trap, and the black ivy-berries are as big as currants and in bunches so heavy they hang their heads. But the remains of the enormous barn are the great sight of the place. It is far larger than Cobbett says. The present writer makes it 80 paces long and 25 wide. The gable ends are colossal, built up without window or buttress. Apparently the task of providing a new roof to cover this huge and high-pitched span was beyond the powers of later generations, so the front wall was moved back many paces and a narrower and meaner building fitted within the old one. The stock-doves fly out of the crevices in these huge gables as if out of a cliff. Every buttress on the side walls is "trimmed" with golden fringes of hard fern, and the ivy stems on the eastern end resemble the knots in ship's cables.

All the way down through the manor towards the south the ground falls gradually lower and lower, divided pretty equally between woods and arable land, with fine farm-houses, the view of the blue Solent opens out in the way Cobbett describes. *Belle Vue* rather than *Beaulieu* would be an appropriate name, the former being proper rather to the place you look *from* than the place you look *at*. The coast of the forest is here so sheltered by the screen of the Isle of Wight hills that it is not till within half a mile of the shore, beyond the ruins at St. Leonard's, that the tops of the oaks begin to incline in

one direction, the certain sign of sea breezes. The cultivated fields run down almost to the beach, and partridges may be seen feeding in the growing corn within a stone's throw of the breakers. Seen across the narrow waters, the line of the island stretches back eastward beyond the line of sight, and the visitor might imagine himself on the shores of the Hellespont, separated only from another continent by the narrow strip of dissociable ocean, guarded like the entrance to the Propontis by castles and fortresses, where the parapets and battlements of Hurst break the



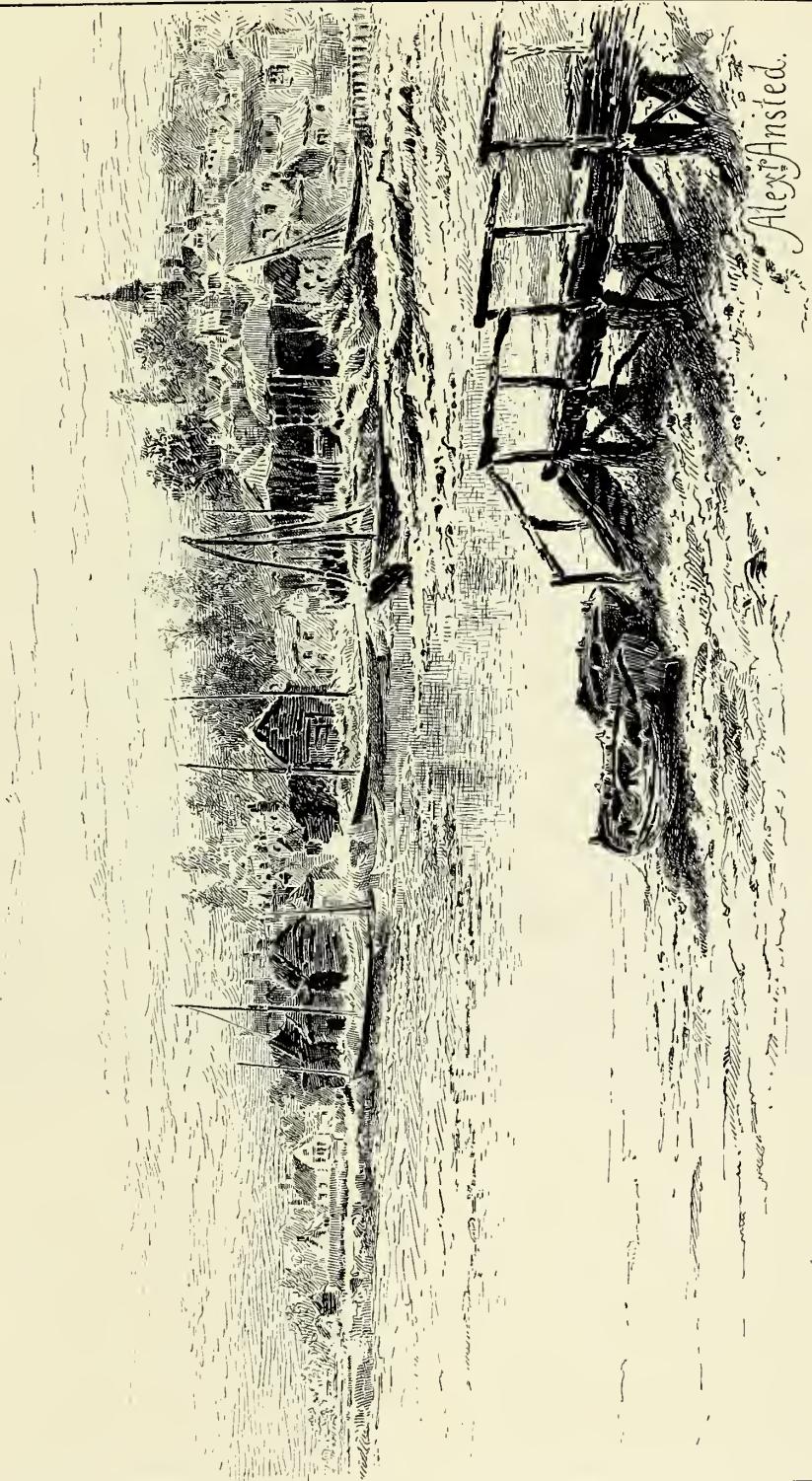
The Edge of the Forest near Lymington.

line of sky, and the series of batteries old and new line the opposite coast with signs and tokens that here also are set the gates of empire. The long low sweep of shore which runs from the sandspit at the mouth of the Beaulieu river to the point at which it begins to be silted up by the mud deposits of the Lymington river, is fronted by shingle, and crossed by innumerable groins of oak trunks driven deep into the ground. Between these the shore slopes up to a green bank, which makes a beautiful turf drive within a few yards of the sea, backed by hedges as green and luxuriant as any on the manor, and fields of growing crops. It is not difficult to picture the "joy in harvest" of those whose lot it is

to cut and reap the corn by this lovely inland sea, where a man may leave binding the sheaves, or the mowers rest at midday, and cross the fence to where the waves come tumbling in before the fresh breeze blowing in from the Needles and the island fortress of Hurst. Further to the south the shore rises with low cliffs, and the shrubs and flowers of the mainland creep quite down among the shingle ; bramble, and hawthorn, grow among the gray and colourless plants of the seashore, and among the sea-thistles and horned poppies, tiny flowers of wild rose blossom, so low that their petals look like little pink shells lying amongst the pebbles.

Lymington, the ancient port of the Royal Forest, as Beaulieu was of the Abbey Estates, lies further west. Its long well-built street runs at right angles to the head of the ancient harbour, at the top of the great mud-silted lagoon which joins it to the Solent. Below the steep hill on which stands the town are the old quays, building slips, and wharves, so close that the masts of the vessels seem to rise among the apple-trees of the gardens. In the meadows near the harbour's mouth are quaint old docks and the remains of what were once elegant pavilions and boat houses. But the sea trade of Lymington has passed to Southampton, and its seaside visitors have deserted it for the Bournemouth sands.

The change from coast to inland scenery, which a few minutes' walk may show, is among the strangest features of a visit to the forest shore. A journey of a few hundred yards along the channel of a little rushing stream, brings the visitor before a fine inland lake, sheltered on nearly every side by woods, and with deep fringes of sedge and reeds ; a perfect paradise for wild-fowl. In the winter this lake is the great resort of the duck, teal, and widgeon, which haunt the waters of the Solent, and come here for rest and quiet during the day, or in rough inclement weather. Beaulieu is almost unrivalled as a resort of wild-fowl. In hard weather wild swans haunt the quiet river, and geese, widgeon, and duck of all kinds are found in numbers, which recall the days of Colonel Hawker, the "father of wild-fowling," whose exploits on the Solent in pursuit of his favourite sport formed one of the earliest and best of British books on wild life. The flamingo which was shot on the river, and is now stuffed at Palace House, was clearly a wild bird ; its delicate white and pink feathers are



Alex^r Anstea.

The Harbour, Lymington.

in perfect condition, free from any break or soiling, which is the certain mark of captivity in wild-fowl. Ospreys visit the river to feed on the mullet, trout, and salmon peel ; and on the heaths beyond black-game are still found. It is said that these are gradually decreasing all over the forest, partly from the number of foxes, partly owing to the ravages of the oologists.



A Creek on the Beaulieu River.

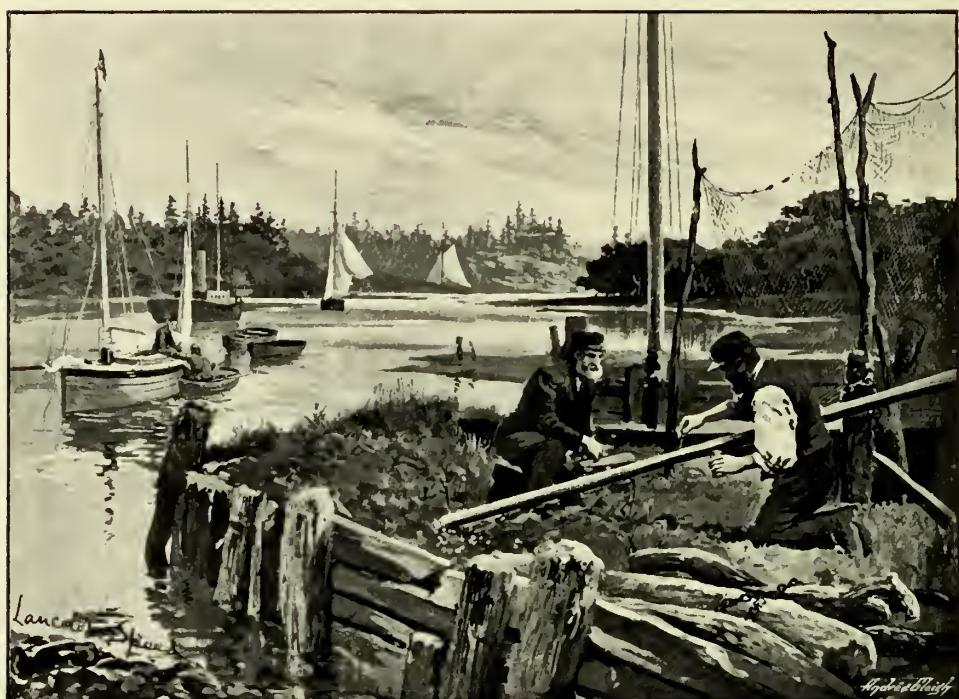
As for the Beaulieu river, there is nothing like it in England, or rather like that part which begins at Beaulieu bridge, and falls into the Solent nine miles below. All the waters of those forest streams, those marshes, bogs, and swamps which you have crossed, leaped over, or sunk into in exploring the northern forest, are at last choked into a wide mere, which would be called a "broad" in Norfolk, by the narrowing of the valley and some ancient engineering

devices of the monks, and then, through a weir opposite the gate of the Palace, the fresh water from the forest above pours into the salt-water river below. Thus above the bridge are water-lilies, below it seaweed ; and from that point a beautiful broad salt river, rapid and sinuous, sweeps through oak woods, and meadows starred with flowers like the meads above Oxford at Rosamond's Bower, yet never quite foregoes that dignity which it borrows from the sea, whose doubled tides advance to fill it not twice, but four times in the twenty-four hours. Here then is a tidal river in which “low water” is but only a change for an hour or two in the landscape, a river whose bed shows only yellow gravel, or little sheets of salttings crowded by feeding birds, and backed by woods, where the banks are disfigured by no towing path or foul factories, and whose silent waters are broken not by steam-tugs and barges, but by fleets of shining swans. Little winding creeks run up into the woods, bordered by close-set rows of dark oak piles, and roofed by the clustered trees, creeks in which you might expect to find the “keel” of some prying Dane docked, while its blue-eyed crew crept up through the woods to spy out the land, or the hidden piraguas of the sea pirates who plundered Panama. Nor is this a mere fanciful suggestion from the scenery. War and opportunity lead to much the same results, whatever the date ; and here in 1704 Beaulieu Palace, nine miles up an English river, was fortified by John, Duke of Montagu, with a moat, walls and towers against the possible attack of French privateers,¹ a precaution which seems less strange than it might, in the light of the plunder of the Earl of Seafield’s plate by Paul Jones, as to which a curious correspondence recently appeared in the newspapers.

The woods which run for miles along the river banks are perhaps equally ancient with the oldest in the forest—ancient that is as having always been wooded ground. But their character is wholly different. They are the woods of a manor, grown for profit, carefully tended, and full of the close and beautiful “sous bois,” or underwood, which in the forest has disappeared, and left only the “haut bois,” or timber trees.

¹ Others account for the moat and turrets round Palace House by the taste for French architecture acquired by the duke in his residence abroad. Part of the woods were also laid out on the French system.

The woods on the opposite bank have that "carded" look, like curly hair combed, which sea-breezes give to trees as well as to sailors' locks ; but except for this and the cries of the lapwings and the redshanks in the rushy meadow below there is nothing in the view which opens on leaving the wood to suggest that the water in front is anything but an inland lake. It winds between the hills exactly like a branch of Virginia Water. On the low ridge to the left is a square built village of



Beaulieu River at Buckler's Hard.

good old red brick, brown tiled houses ; not so much a village indeed as a street, running at right angles to the river, and looking like a section of old Portsea cut away and set down in the woods. And that is exactly what it is ; a fragment of the great arsenal, left high and dry by time on the shores of the Beaulieu river. Here, on the green slope where the cattle feed and children play, was built of New Forest oak, Nelson's ship the *Agamemnon*, 64, the ship which he was commanding when he lost his

right eye at the siege of Calvi, the ship which carried his flag in the battle of the Baltic, one of whose crew, at the battle of St. Vincent, tucked under his arm the swords of the Spanish officers as if gathering sticks for a faggot. Those whose boding fancy foresees a time when no sign will be left of the great industries of the North but burnt-out cinder heaps, should consider the history of Buckler's Hard.

In the middle of the last century, John Duke of Montagu, Lord of Beaulieu, and owner of the great sugar-island of St. Vincent, and inheritor of the rights of the Abbots of Beaulieu to a free harbour upon his river, determined to make a seaport at Buckler's Hard. It was a far-sighted scheme, in view of the American trade, which posterity has justified by the creation of modern Southampton. Grants of land at a nominal rent, and of timber delivered free, soon attracted shipbuilders to the spot, and in September, 1743, the *Surprise*, 24, the first battleship built on the river was launched. From that time till the end of the great war, the work grew and prospered. Frigates succeeded sloops, and battleships frigates, and each vessel after it left the slips, was taken round to be fitted and manned at Portsmouth. The *Surprise* went out to fight the French in May, 1750; the *Vigilant*, 64, 1,374 tons, in 1774; the *Hannibal*, 74, was launched in 1810. The *Agamemnon*, after carrying Lord Nelson through the battle of the Baltic, and taking her share in Trafalgar, was lost in Maldonado Bay in the River Plate in 1809; the *Indefatigable*, the *Illustrious*, the *Swiftsure*, line of battle-ships, and a whole fleet of frigates were launched at Buckler's Hard during the latter years of the war. Such was the skill of the builders and the resources of the place that a seventy-four gun ship was not longer than thirty months upon the stocks, though 2,000 oaks, 100 tons of wrought iron, and 30 tons of copper, were worked into her fabric. The whole of this great industry was created and directed by one man, Mr. Henry Adams, who carried it on for sixty years, and lived till the age of ninety-two. His sons succeeded him; and the ruin of Buckler's Hard was due, not to the failure of its resources, but to the deliberate action of the Admiralty. The Adamses were commissioned to build four ships at once, and for not delivering them by the date agreed on, were ruined by fines and litigation at the instance of the Government whom they served. Of their once prosperous yard, no sign remains but the houses they built, and four

grass-grown hollows in the shore which were the slipways of the battleships. In one of these, filled with water at high tide, lies the rotting skeleton of a wooden vessel, her stem and stern posts still upright, while from her back project the broken and distorted ribs, and bent bolts of copper. From a tree in the garden of what once was the home of the Adamses, there still waves, as if in mockery, a ragged Union Jack.

The squatters' houses which fringe the forest, are the subject of much amusing legend and odd domestic history. They illustrate the unsettled and lawless condition which prevailed in the district towards the end of the last century, better, perhaps, than any other feature of the forest.

A favourite site for their colonies was on the fringe of some great estate projecting into the Crown Forest. At Beaulieu, for instance, the boundary of the property is called the "Manor Bank." South and east of the Abbey it abuts on high flat open heaths; and there the line of division is a bank in the literal sense, a high rampart of earth separating the cultivated land and plantations of Beaulieu from the wild and open forest. To this bank, the cottages of the commoners and squatters cling like swallows' nests to the eaves. It is said that in the old days of encroachments, custom ruled, that if a house were once built, *roofed*, and a fire lit within, it was not in the power of the Crown to pull it down. Occupation, and not architecture, was the object of the squatters, and the game of house-building in the forest was soon played with a skill born of long practice, which baffled the spasmodic fits of energy on the part of the authorities. It reached such a stage of perfection that the art of building, roofing, putting in a chimney, and lighting a fire within the space of a single winter's night was at last attained; and the curl of smoke rising defiantly in the gray of a December morning was the signal that the squatter had triumphed, and that henceforth he was irremovable. Some of these little cabins are still used, though more commodious dwellings have been added to them. Others stand, or are tumbling down, in the gardens of later buildings. Fifty years of settled and prosperous occupation have not given them the complacency of the humdrum cottage. They never quite lose the hasty, half-defiant look which is their birthmark, though their present owners enjoy a degree of security, independence, and general goodwill, which their honourable and industrious lives fully justify. The ancient contrast of the life within

and without the "pale," is nowhere more picturesquely suggested than by the line of old cottages at "Hill Top," at the edge of Beaulieu Heath. The cottages are all set in narrow strips of garden, won from the heath. These bits of ground are now fertile and well cultivated. The houses themselves present an odd contrast of original poverty and present comfort. In structure they are, for the most part, of the roughest, and by no means most durable order. Some are of one story, some of two. The walls of all, or nearly all, are of yellow clay, something like the "cob" or "clay-lump" cottages and barns of South Devon. The roofs are straw-thatch, though in some this has been replaced by slate. The material of the walls seems hardly adequate to support two stories, for in many the wall bends inwards, and the lattice windows, and wooden frames seem to have taken kindly to the curvature. In some of the gardens the original house, which gave the "claim" to the land, still remains, a kind of "doll's house," which was enough to support the legal fiction of occupation. Most of the cottages have little pony-stables, piggeries, and wood-stacks attached, and though the exterior is humble and sometimes dilapidated, a glance at the interior gives every evidence of comfort and good living. The rooms are well and substantially furnished, with abundance of brightly kept household gear. There are flowers in the windows, pretty curtains and blinds, and the small and pleasing evidences of a mind so far free from the hardships of life as to find time for the enjoyment of its minor amenities. Above all the children are healthy, well dressed, and in many cases of singular beauty. There is one type which seems common in these cottages on the high uplands of the forest, gray eyes with dark lashes, small regular features, and a complexion of the most delicate pink and white, not the common cherry-cheeked complexion of rustic good looks, but of a far purer and more refined order, which seems as characteristic of the children of the forest as their quiet and reserved demeanour.

Men living the life of these commoners, attract an amount of interest and sympathy which must have its root in an appeal to some widely diffused and common sentiment. They are not a numerous class, the owners of from one to twenty acres being about 580. But these only hold $\frac{1}{26}$ th part of the land entitled to rights of common, which are always attached to some particular house or piece of land. These are let by the

great proprietors to tenants who pay rent both for houses, land and forest rights, and make the same use of them as is done by the small freeholders. Both are an extremely honest, industrious and independent class of men, among whom theft is unknown, and drunkenness and improvidence extremely rare.

The existence of both is dependent upon the forest rights which they enjoy, the nature of which is better ascertained than their origin. In the case of many holdings the title is extremely ancient, in others a claim to ownership made by a squatter has probably been followed by a concession of common rights. Their present extent is very carefully defined. The first and most important is the right of pasture for all kinds of cattle but goats and sheep, except in the case of the owners of the Manors of Beaulieu and Brockenhurst. 5,469 cattle were turned out in the forest by commoners in the year 1892. The second is the "common of mast," or right of feeding hogs, otherwise called "pannage"; and this is so valuable that in a good acorn year each pig run in the forest is said to increase ten shillings in value, without cost to the owner.

"Pannage time" lasts, properly speaking, from September 25th to November 22nd; but though the Crown has the right to impound pigs found in the forest at other times, this rule is seldom enforced. When there are no nuts and acorns, New Forest pigs graze almost like cattle, cropping the grass with their teeth. Formerly they must have been the most characteristic animal of the forest, after the deer. Cobbett, on his ride to Beaulieu from Lyndhurst, says: "Of pigs this day we saw many, many thousand. I should think we saw at least a hundred hogs to one deer. I stopped at one time and counted the hogs and pigs just round me, and they amounted to 140, all within fifty or sixty yards of my horse."

The gathering of the pigs in "pannage time" was until recently one of the most complete survivals of Saxon days known in this country. The swineherd received from each commoner the pigs he wished fattened, with a small payment for each animal. A convenient place had been previously selected for a rough sty, where there was plenty of beech-mast, acorns, and water. "In Bolderwood Walk," says Mr. Rogers, author of the "Guide to the New Forest," "there were many favourite localities, as it contained the greatest number of beech trees. When the spot was

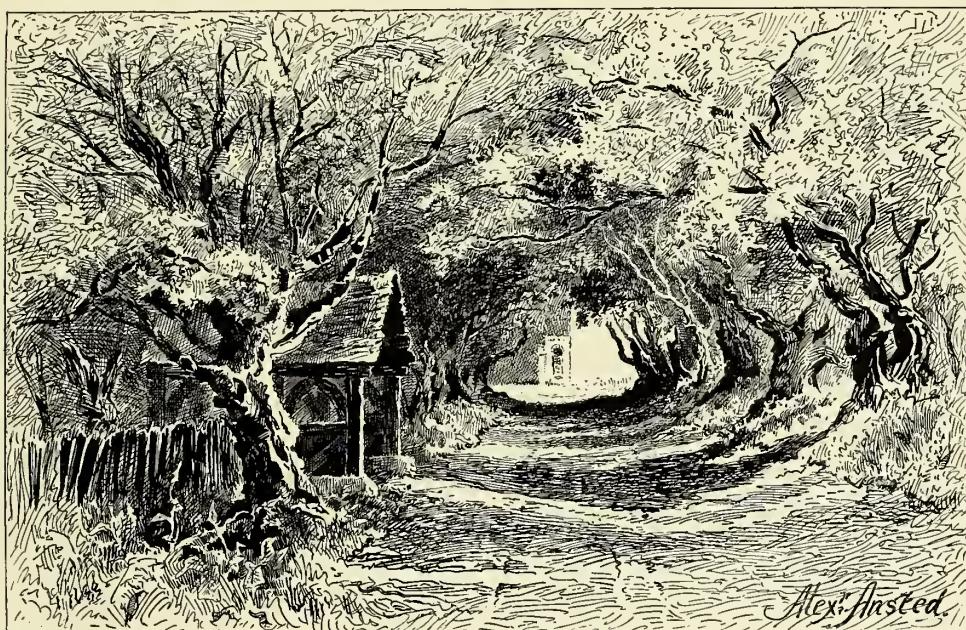
Herding Swine in the Clew Forest.

Lancast Speed Paine.



Lancast Speed
Tinted

reached by the collected hogs, they were generally tired by their long journey, but an abundant supper was provided for them, and they woke up next day refreshed by a good sleep." This thoughtful provision for the pigs' comfort is characteristic of the high respect in which the friendly forest pig is held by its owner. "Plenty of food was then given them for breakfast, the 'herd' meanwhile blowing his horn; after which they had a little liberty, a few old 'pannage hogs' accompanying them as



Highcliff.

leaders. They usually did not want to stray far, as food was very abundant, and in the evening were called by the horn, and fed as before. After two or three days they were as obedient as possible, and would assemble at any time on hearing the signal."

The old-fashioned, wild-looking, rust-coloured pig seems to have disappeared from the forest, and good black modern swine have replaced them. But they take very kindly to the life, and no one can know what an intelligent, cleanly animal the pig is by nature till he has seen him roaming half wild among the big trees, and apparently by common

consent, the leader in all the daily movements for food, shelter, water, of the mixed herd of cows, ponies, and donkeys with which he associates.

There are two minor common rights, probably very ancient, both of which are much prized by their possessors. They confer the right of fuel on the cottages to which they are attached. One is the right of "Turbary," or cutting turf on the heaths, the other that of "Estovers" or fuel. The turf right is not much used, except by the forest commoners; and while stick gathering is so easy in the wooded parts of the forest a poor man need never want small fuel. The rights of "Estover" are supposed to date from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who enacted that "no inhabitors of any house builded since the beginning of the Queen Majesty's reign that now is, shall be allowed any wood in the same forest to be burnt or expended therein." This right was much abused, as whole trees of oak and beech were assigned, for the right now applies to the timber of the hard-wood trees. This is now supplied from the "waste of the forest," and by some curious result of the drawing of recent acts, not from the inclosed young plantations, but from the old woods of the Stuarts or Elizabeth. The right is, however, being bought up by the Crown when practicable, and the number of loads is reduced from 800 to 367.

The future of these ancient woods is a matter of some concern to those who are intrusted with the management of the forest. It is feared that as the old trees die there will be few or no young trees to replace them, as the greater number are destroyed by the cattle when saplings. Meantime the 20,000 acres of Crown plantations are growing up to take their place, and as these are thrown open, the area covered with timber trees will increase instead of diminishing. Meantime, when frost and storm have widened the breaches in the Tudor woods, portions can be inclosed from time to time for natural reproduction and the preservation of that balance of wood, heath, swamp and pasture which makes the scenery of the New Forest unique among the beauties of England.

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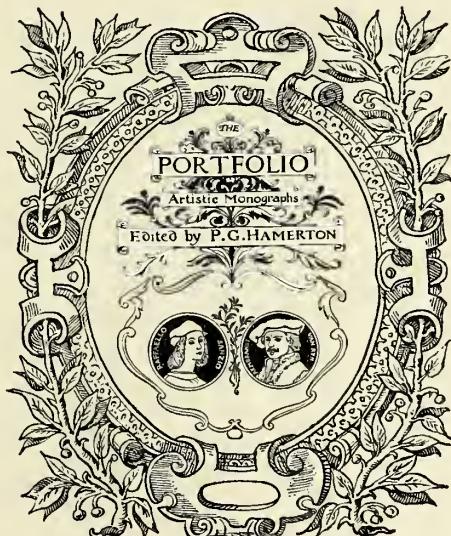
Portrait of Mrs. Beaufoy

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

By

WALTER ARMSTRONG

Director of the National Gallery of Ireland



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* * * *The Publishers' thanks are due to all who have kindly permitted the reproduction of pictures in their possession.*

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

THE materials for a history of Gainsborough's life and work are strangely and disconcertingly meagre. And this is the more disappointing when we remember how full a record exists of his great rival and contemporary. Literature has made the career of Reynolds no less familiar than those of his friends, Johnson, Burke, or Goldsmith. How is it, then, that a modern writer finds it so difficult to gather facts for a sufficient monograph of Gainsborough? The explanation certainly does not lie in any accepted inferiority, for Gainsborough at least divides the supremacy of our school with the older artist. Nor, though perhaps more emphatically a painter's painter than Sir Joshua, is his art of the kind which appeals only to the few. For while the full measure of his power is recognised chiefly by the initiated, he delights a multitude whose knowledge goes no deeper than the perception of his grace, his distinction, and his poetic charm. The anomaly is to be accounted for partly by the peculiar character of Gainsborough as a man, partly by the comparatively short duration of his activity in London, which covered only the last fourteen years of his life. It is a commonplace to say that the tone of cultivated society in England during the eighteenth century was pre-eminently literary; that never, perhaps, has it approximated more closely to the ideal fostered by the institution of the French *salon*. Conversation was a fine art, and an acquaintance with letters was deemed a necessary part of a gentleman's equipment. Statesmen and poets, wits and men of letters, flocked together to argue and discuss, sometimes, it is believed, to pose, and

occasionally to applaud. In such re-unions Sir Joshua was a prominent figure. Memoirs of the day abound in references to his art, to his friends, to his sterling character, and to his amiable manners. Such pages have nothing to say of Gainsborough. From a society where all more or less affected culture he held aloof. The least literary of painters, occupied with his own thoughts rather than with other men's conceptions, he disliked and avoided everything in the nature of speculative discussion. He had little love for books, and declared in one of his letters that his reading had been in the volume of nature, and that he coveted no other learning. The society which refreshed and delighted Reynolds would have wearied him and left him depressed. He had acquaintances among men of letters but scarcely a friend, except Sheridan. He loved the company of musicians, of actors, in fact, of all those among whom he might laugh and jest with more than a *souçon* of licence. He is said to have had extraordinary powers of repartee; but his retorts were the fruit of mother-wit, and had no literary flavour. During his prosperous career he suffered few of those griefs and disappointments which turn the mind to deep thoughts or bitter musings. Curious as it may seem in the creator of so many marvels of elegance, refinement, and *spiritualité*, Gainsborough's personal tastes led him rather into the company of Tony Lumpkins than of young Marlows. It is natural, then, that the companion of Quin and Foote, of Abel and Fischer, should figure less prominently in the archives of his day than the friend of Burke and Johnson, of Goldsmith and Boswell.

No very complete biography of Gainsborough has yet been written. The most important is Mr. Fulcher's more than respectable essay, which has been the chief authority for the following sketch. A certain weight must be given to the short memoir by Philip Thicknesse, of whom we shall hear a good deal as we go along. Its value is discounted no doubt by the character of its writer, a man notoriously incapable of either calm judgment or impartial narrative; his *brochure* seems to have been over contemptuously dismissed by subsequent students of Gainsborough's career. Such as it is, it is the only contemporary record we possess, and Thicknesse, if dull-witted and wrongheaded, was at least conscientious and sincere.

John Thomas Smith, once Keeper of the Prints in the British Museum, and author of the vivacious life of Nollekens, was at one time anxious to write a biography of Gainsborough. He commissioned Constable, himself a native of Gainsborough's country, to collect material; with what poor success is shown in the following letter :

“ EAST BERGHOLT, 7th May, 1797.

“ DEAR FRIEND SMITH,—If you remember, in my last I promised to write again soon and tell what I could about Gainsborough. I hope you will not think me negligent when I inform you that I have not been able to learn anything of consequence respecting him : I can assure you it is not for the want of asking that I have not been successful, for indeed I have talked with those who knew him. I believe in Ipswich they did not know his value till they lost him. He belonged to something of a musical club in that town, and painted some of their portraits in a picture of a choir. I heard it was in Colchester ; I shall endeavour to see it before I come to town, which will be soon. He was generally the butt of the company, and his wig was to them a fund of amusement, as it was often snatched from his head and thrown about the room, &c.”

The rest of the letter throws no further light on the subject, though it continues in the same strain.

So far as it is known, the story of Gainsborough's life is a simple and happy one. It may be broadly divided into three sections, their divisions being marked by the two great events of the painter's career—his migrations to Bath and London.

GAINSBOROUGH IN SUFFOLK.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH was born early in May, 1727 (the exact date is not known), in the country town of Sudbury, in Suffolk. He was the youngest of a family of nine children, all brought up reputably and well by his father, a thrifty tradesman variously described as a milliner, a clothier, a crape manufacturer, and a shroudmaker, who no doubt, combined all these avocations and, said scandal, occasionally helped them out with a little quiet smuggling. The elder Gainsborough was a dissenter, of the sect of Independents, and Thomas was baptized on the 14th of May at the meeting-house of that denomination. His mother, however, was a member of the Church of England. The picturesque old house in which he saw the light was originally an inn, with the sign of the Black Horse. An engraving by Finden has preserved its quaint gables and projecting upper stories, although the building itself can no longer be identified.

Sudbury was one of those eastern burghs in which Edward III. had planted the Flemish weavers, whom he brought over to teach their craft to his subjects, and the ancient industry still flourished in the eighteenth century. The income of Gainsborough, senior, was derived chiefly from the manufacture of fine woollen goods (technically called "capes") and from the lugubrious *métier* of shroudmaking. The latter industry, of which he long enjoyed a monopoly in the district, he had introduced into Suffolk from Coventry. He is described as of fine presence and manners, extremely neat and punctilious in his dress, a good citizen, an upright tradesman, and a kind and conscientious master. Of his wife, whose maiden name was Burroughs, we are told little, save that she was

a notable housewife, and had a “genteel talent” for flower-painting. In what we know of this worthy couple we find little indeed to account for the brilliant artistic gifts of their youngest son. But some strain of originality must have lain dormant in the blood, for two of Thomas’s elder brothers seem to have shown remarkable powers of invention in other fields. John, an eccentric person, whose freaks were often the nine days’ wonder of his native town, had undoubtedly mechanical genius, though of an unpractical kind. His talent seems, indeed, to have had a touch of madness about it. He was known in the neighbourhood as “Scheming Jack.” One of his exploits was the invention of a flying apparatus, with which he made a public experiment from the roof of a house. The unhappy Icarus promptly fell into a neighbouring ditch amidst the laughter of the assembled crowd. Among his most successful and most useless inventions were a cradle that rocked itself, a cuckoo that would sing all the year round, and a wheel that turned in a still bucket of water. He was engrossed in later life by an invention for the discovery of the longitude, and, as his poor wife complained, laid out every five guineas sent him by his more prosperous brother on brass-work for his apparatus. When at last this machine was completed he determined to go to the East Indies to try it. He got no further than London, where he fell ill and died.

Humphrey, the second brother, had the inventive faculty too, but within saner limits. He became a dissenting minister and settled at Henley-on-Thames. Between him and Thomas a warm affection always existed, and nothing pleased the painter more during his career in London than to take a day’s holiday by the river-side with his brother. A fine portrait by Gainsborough of this favourite companion was at the Gainsborough Exhibition in 1885. In treatment it is somewhat akin to that of the *Parish Clerk* in the National Gallery—the face turned upwards, the light falling upon it, the expression thoughtful and melancholy. Humphrey Gainsborough was an ardent worker in his profession, and his mechanical experiments were the amusements of his leisure. His friends asserted that Watt owed to him one of the most important improvements in his steam-engine, the condensation of the steam in a separate vessel. The appropriation of his idea by Watt is said to have preyed greatly upon his mind. A curious sundial of novel

construction executed by him is in the British Museum. He anticipated the invention of fire-proof boxes, and gained a premium of £50 from the Society of Arts for the model of a tide-mill. In the summer of 1776, when on his way to dine with some friends, he fell dead on the road.

Of the painter's two remaining brothers, one, Mathias, died in boyhood from the effects of an accident. Of the other, Robert, little is known beyond the fact that he settled in Lancashire. His four sisters, all married : Mary, a dissenting minister named Gibbon, and Susanna, a Mr. Gardiner, both of Bath ; Sarah, Mr. Dupont, and Elizabeth, Mr. Bird, both of Sudbury. The marriage of Sarah is of most interest to us. Her son, Gainsborough Dupont, became his uncle's pupil and assistant. He died in 1797 at the early age of thirty, but not before having given evidence of great talent, both as painter and engraver. Many of his mezzotints after his uncle's works are excellent. His chief original picture is a portrait group of the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House, which hangs in the Council Hall of that corporation. On the death of his uncle he is said to have completed several of his unfinished pictures, and a good many portraits which now bear the name of the older man, are, probably at least, the work of his nephew.

As a child, Gainsborough was duly sent to get learning at the grammar school of his native town, the head-master of which was his mother's brother, the Reverend Humphrey Burroughs. His progress in the humanities was, however, slight, for every unobserved moment was given, not to mastering the contents of his books, but to the ornamentation of their fly-leaves and covers with sketches of flowers, trees, and animals. "At ten he is said to have spent all his leisure pencil in hand, and to have already gained some facility in sketching. At twelve he had resolved to be a painter, and was busy with colours and brushes. At fourteen his schooling ended." "And yet," says Allan Cunningham, "his letters, which I have seen, show no want in the art of expressing clear thoughts in clear words." He was "quick at the uptake," and gathered knowledge instinctively as he trod the path of life. His first drawing is said to have been a group of trees, which in later years he gave, together with many other sketches of trees, rocks, shepherds, ploughmen, and pastoral scenes on scraps of letter-paper, to his first

patron, Mr. Philip Thicknesse. "I considered it," writes Thicknesse, "a wonderful performance, not unworthy of a place in one of the painter's best landscapes." Be this as it may, the boy evidently gave precocious signs of talent.¹ His greatest delight was sketching from nature. Holidays were often begged for this purpose, and not unfrequently granted, when the young artist would be off to the pleasant woods that skirted his native town, and spend long summer days in drawing. On one occasion the usual slip of paper from his father to his uncle, authorising the treat, was refused. The signed formula, "Give Tom a holiday," was nevertheless forged by the audacious truant with such exactness, that it readily deceived Mr. Burroughs. The trick was discovered by some untoward accident, and Tom's father paid a horrified tribute to the excellence of the fraud by exclaiming, "Tom will be hanged!" When, however, the sketches made by the boy were submitted to him, he changed his mind, and decided that "Tom would be a genius!"² Another anecdote of the painter's childhood deals with a sketch known as *Tom Peartree*, which anticipated the pretensions of the detective camera!
On several occasions the paternal orchard had been robbed, the thief always getting off scot-free. But one day Tom happened to be drawing among some bushes in the garden, when, looking up, he saw a peasant of the neighbourhood leaning over the wall and gazing up wistfully at the laden pear-trees. The boy sketched him, and showed his *pièce de conviction* in the family circle, to the delight of his father, who afterwards produced it to the confusion of the culprit.

Such unequivocal signs of a vocation Gainsborough's parents wisely determined not to disregard. At fourteen he was sent to London to study art. On the authority, apparently, of Grignon the engraver, he is said to have boarded with a silversmith whose name is not recorded, but who at least introduced him to Gravelot. Gravelot not only taught him the elements of his own art, but recognizing his true bent, procured him admission to the Saint Martin's Lane Academy. Shortly afterwards the boy entered the studio of Hayman, a mediocre and now almost forgotten painter, whose historical pictures were in high repute at the time, but whose fame as a *viveur* was far better deserved. A youth like Gainsborough, who even in childhood had learnt the secret of a constant communion with Nature, had little indeed to gain from the teaching of

Hayman, or the example of his contemporaries. Art in this country was at its lowest ebb. The long succession of illustrious foreigners who had given a vicarious glory to painting in England for more than two hundred years, had come to an end, and our native school was just beginning to struggle to its feet, with the help of several mediocrities, such as Hayman, Richardson, Heighway, and two men of genius,



Portrait of a Man in pencil.

Hogarth and Wilson. Hogarth, however, was ostracised by his brethren. Wilson was unappreciated, as, by the way, he still remains. The art that Gainsborough saw applauded and imitated must have seemed contemptible enough to his frank eyes, even in his novitiate. From his apprenticeship he can have gleaned little but some knowledge of the mechanics of his art, and plentiful indications of what to avoid. His

instincts preserved him from the assimilation of a vulgar and feeble ideal, but certain early portraits are said to have been absolutely without distinction. In the National Gallery of Ireland, however, there are two portraits in pencil, dated 1743-4, which prove that at the age of sixteen Gainsborough had already gained the delicacy of hand and the power to see which are conspicuous in the more careful works of his later years,



Portrait of a Woman in pencil.

such, for instance, as the *Parish Clerk*. Hayman's social example was unfortunate for the country-bred lad, and the weaknesses of his after life are referred by his biographers to this early influence. Not that his lapses were of a very serious nature. It is certain, however, that he sowed a fair crop of wild oats, and acquired a taste for conviviality of a rather Dutch description. A letter written in his maturity to John

Henderson, the actor, seems to point to the usual youthful follies : “Don’t run about London streets fancying you are catching strokes of nature, at the hazard of your constitution. It was my first school, and deeply read in petticoats I am, therefore you may allow me to caution you.”

After three years of apprenticeship to such art and morality as Hayman had to teach, Gainsborough resolved to set up for himself. He took a lodging in Hatton Garden, and began work for dealers, painting landscapes and laborious portraits at prices varying from three to five guineas. He also worked at modelling, and acquired great facility in the rendering of animal forms and movements. But his efforts met with little encouragement, and at the end of a year’s probation, he made up his mind to leave London, and seek his fortune in the kindlier atmosphere of his native Suffolk.

It may be, as Cunningham tells us, that he was moved to this step by a mistrust of his own powers, which made him look upon himself as at best a possibly successful provincial portrait-painter. He saw, no doubt, that he was not likely to excel by the methods in vogue at the moment. It may be too, that like Constable after him, he felt that there was “room for a natural painter,” and that for such a one, his own woods and fields would be his best teachers. But probably the decisive consideration was one of immediate £ s. d. He followed the line of least resistance, moving from London to his native district because the latter held out hopes of a sufficient income for his wants, and left future developments to take care of themselves.

At eighteen he accordingly returned to Sudbury, where he was most cordially received. Good looks, a reputation for talent, a bright intelligence in conversation combined with perfect modesty of bearing, gave him a peculiar charm for those with whom he was brought into contact. He at once began the earnest study of landscape, rising at dawn to note effects of early morning light, and often working till sunset. The sylvan beauty of the Suffolk fields and lanes was to him, as to Constable, a never-failing source of inspiration. There was not, he used to declare, “a picturesque clump of trees, nor even a single tree of any beauty, no, nor hedgerow, stem, nor post,” about his native place, that was not indelibly pictured in his memory.



Wood near Cornard, Suffolk.

J. G. M. D. (J. G. M. D. Smith)



At this distance of time it is impossible to trace the influences under which he laboured otherwise than by the intrinsic evidence in his work. Like every other painter reared in the eastern counties, he seems to have formed himself on Dutch models. Just as, a generation later, Old Crome and his disciples were to mould themselves on the examples of Hobbema and Ruysdael, so Gainsborough seems to have taken the mediocre Wynants for his master. The connection is unmistakable. In his early pictures the method is thoroughly Wynants-like. The conceptions throw back to the Dutchman's; the palette is like his; the bits of roadside scenery, even the placing of the figures, the oppositions of sky and earth, of cloud and tree, of sandy foreground and forest edge, of empty to crowded spaces, are so identical in both men that the difference could hardly be expressed in words. It is only in the delicacy of his colour and impasto that Gainsborough shows a distinct superiority at this time over his chosen guide. His work, indeed, from the very first, has a distinction of which no trace is to be found in Wynants. But that distinction springs entirely from the two points of superiority I have mentioned. Gainsborough never ventured upon the use of full tones until he had mastered the harmonies to be won from grays. In his *Great Cornard Wood*, the typical example of his first period, there is no positive colour. The chromatic scale is almost as quiet as Van Goyen's. The result is, that we have a picture as thoroughly at peace with itself, as completely singleminded in its aim, as free from accident and irrelevance as a Van Goyen, or a Ruysdael.

According to the earliest version of his history, it was on one of his sketching expeditions that Gainsborough fell in love with his future wife. The artist was at work upon "a group of fine trees, with sheep reposing below and wood-doves roosting above," when a beautiful girl appeared on the scene, and as Cunningham quaintly puts it, "was at once admitted into the landscape and the feelings of the artist." But in Fulcher's *Life* the pretty pastoral is demolished, and a less idyllic legend substituted. Miss Margaret Burr was, it seems, the sister of a traveller employed in the business of Gainsborough the elder. Her extraordinary beauty was long a tradition in Suffolk, and on the arrival of the young artist from London, the country belle was naturally eager to have her portrait painted. The sittings, which were protracted to the utmost, ended in the betrothal



Portrait of Orpin, Parish Clerk of Bradford-on-Avon.

of the young couple. They were married the following year ; Gainsborough being then nineteen, and his wife twelve months younger. Unlike many such ventures, this early marriage was in all respects fortunate. Mrs. Gainsborough brought an income of £200 a year to her husband, who was thus enabled to start on his career without any harassing dependence on daily effort for existence. She was further a woman of sweet and equable temper, and proved the most tender and faithful of companions. Even Thicknesse, whose animosity she incurred by a desire with which he credited her to detach her husband from himself, could find no charge more damaging to bring against her than one of thriftiness verging on parsimony. He declares that the painter never dared to drive up to his own door in a hackney coach, fearing his wife's wrath at the extravagance of such a luxury, and that he was invariably set down some hundred yards or so short of his destination. It was well known, however, among Gainsborough's friends, that this proceeding was due to an absurd weakness of the painter himself, who could not bear to be seen driving in a hired carriage. Another unlikely story relates how Mrs. Gainsborough hoarded up a quantity of drawings, many of them the work of her daughter, Mrs. Fischer, with a view to one day selling them as her husband's. "After Tom's death they will fetch a good deal of money," is the prudent reflection ascribed to her, and "Much good may they do her!" the biographer's vicious comment. Some colour was given to these calumnies by the frugal disposition Mrs. Gainsborough is said to have inherited from her Scotch ancestry—a disposition which no doubt had its value in the wife of one so impulsively generous as the painter himself.

A certain mystery surrounds the parentage of Margaret Burr. It was whispered that she was an illegitimate daughter of one of the exiled Stuarts; other rumours pointed to the Duke of Bedford as her father. She herself seems to have inclined to the former belief. A story accepted by all who have written about her, tells how, on the occasion of some festivity, the magnificence of her dress attracted attention, and she justified her splendour to her niece, Mrs. Lane, with, "I have some right to this, for you know, my love, I am a prince's daughter." The income of £200 a year was, no doubt, derived from the mysterious parent, but so well was the secret kept, that her own daughters never

knew by whom the allowance was paid. The money, they told an inquirer, was regularly transmitted through a London bank and placed to Mrs. Gainsborough's account, but further than this they could tell nothing. Some little support is given to the other version of her pedigree by the remarkable likeness which certainly existed between her and the Duke of Bedford. Portraits of them both hung near each other at the Gainsborough Exhibition in 1885, and the likeness was undeniable.

The painter's home seems to have been peculiarly happy. In spite of his convivial turn upon occasions, he was never more contented, even when most in vogue, than by his own fireside. We are told that "he loved to sit by his wife in the evening, and make sketches of whatever occurred to his fancy, all of which he threw beneath the table, save such as were more than commonly happy, and those were preserved, and either finished as sketches or expanded into pictures." In connection with his domestic life, one of those little anecdotes, which by repetition assume an undeserved importance and occasionally give a false ring to character, has been handed down. On the rare occasions of little domestic squabbles (for Gainsborough, though easily appeased, was hot-tempered and hasty) the painter, if conscious of having spoken sharply to his wife, would write her a penitent note, signing it with the name of his favourite dog, "Fox," and addressing it to his wife's pet, "Tristram." The dog was taught to deliver these notes to his companion, and on its receipt, Margaret would reply in such fashion as this: "My own dear Fox,—You are always loving and good, and I am a naughty little female ever to worry you as I too often do; so we will kiss and say no more about it. Your own affectionate Tris." It is to be hoped that this little comedy had no run!

Upon their marriage in 1745, the young couple rented a small house in Sudbury for about six months, Gainsborough working at his sketches of cottagers and woodland scenery. They then removed to Ipswich, where the painter no doubt hoped to find patrons among the rich merchants of the city, or its neighbouring squires. But commissions were slow in coming. One provincial magnate proposed indeed to employ him, but an interview resulted in the discovery that the artist had been mistaken for a house-painter, and was expected to put in window panes, and touch up dilapidated doors and walls. During one



Landscape.

EDGEMICK

of his sketching expeditions on the banks of the Orwell, he made the acquaintance of a stranger, who showed much interest in his work. This was Mr. Joshua Kirby, a writer upon art, who became a valued friend and congenial companion. Kirby was a man of some reputation in his day. He is now remembered as the author of a *Treatise on Perspective*, as the first President of the Society of Arts, as the father of the exemplary Mrs. Trimmer, and as one of Gainsborough's sitters. He had a house at Ipswich, and the two men spent many a pleasant hour in each other's company, sketching, or theorising on the art they both loved. So high was Mr. Kirby's opinion of Gainsborough's talents, that he placed his young son with him as a pupil, no less to the advantage of the youth's manners than of his talents, if we accept the high authority of the future Mrs. Trimmer. "Having," she writes to her brother during his apprenticeship, "so good an example to copy after, I imagine you improve very much in politeness." It is possible, of course, that the painter had some of Hayman's polish still about him, and that Miss Kirby "wrote ironical," though irony was scarcely Mrs. Trimmer's forte. The friendships between the two families was interrupted by the removal of the Kirbies to London in 1753. Foremost among his other intimates at this period were Mr. Kilderbee, of Ipswich, for whom he painted many pictures. He was the original owner of the exquisite *View in the Mall, St. James's Park*. Mr. Hingeston of Southwold, of whom he painted two portraits, and Mr. Robert Edgar, a lawyer of Colchester, and one of his earliest patrons. The Edgar family afterwards removed to Ipswich, and were the fortunate possessors of many examples of the painter. A most interesting letter to Mr. Edgar, characteristic of Gainsborough alike as artist and man, is extant. It has been often quoted in part, but being in fact a sort of *Apologia* for the individuality of method for which the painter was sometimes taken to task, it demands reprinting here.

"SIR,—I am favor'd with your obliging letter, and return you many thanks for your kind intention; I thought I should have been at Colchester by this time, as I promis'd my sister I would the first opportunity, but business comes in, and being chiefly in the Face way, I'm afraid to put people off when they are in the mind to sit. You



A Dog.

please me much by saying that no other fault is found in your picture¹ than the roughness of the surface, for that part being of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by ; in short, being the touch of the pencil, which is harder to preserve than smoothness, I am much better pleas'd that they should spy out things of that kind, than to see an eye half an inch out of its place, or a nose out of drawing when viewed at a proper distance. I don't think it would be more ridiculous for a person to put his nose close to the canvas and say the colours smell offensive, than to say how rough the paint lies ; for one is just as material as the other with regard to hurting the effect and drawing of a picture. Sir Godfrey Kneller used to tell them that pictures were not made to smell of ; and what made his pictures more valuable than others with the connoisseurs was his pencil or touch. I hope, Sir, you'll pardon this dissertation upon pencil and touch, for if I gain no better point than to make you and Mr. Clubb laugh when you next meet at the sign of the 'Tankard,' I shall be very well contented. I'm sure I could not paint his pictures for laughing, he gave such a description of eating and drinking at that place. I little thought you were a lawyer when I said not one in ten was worth hanging. I told Clubb of that, and he seemed to think I was lucky that I did not say one in a hundred. It's too late to ask your pardon now, but really, Sir, I never saw one of your profession look so honest in my life, and that's the reason I concluded you were in the wool-trade. Sir Jasper Wood was so kind as to set me right, otherwise perhaps I should have made more blunders.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient and obliged humble servant,

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

"IPSWICH, March 13, 1758."

Of all the friendships formed at this period, however, that which was of most significance in the painter's career was undoubtedly the intimacy with that Philip Thicknesse to whom we have already had occasion to allude more than once. To judge fairly of the complications

¹ The picture, judging from a letter of an earlier date, was a portrait of his correspondent.

that arose from this friendship, it is necessary to know something of the governor's character. No doubt Thicknesse had redeeming qualities,



Portrait of Lady Ray.

otherwise he could scarcely have enjoyed a long intimacy with one so essentially intelligent and lovable as Gainsborough. But these were

ERRATUM.

In the *Portfolio* for September Gainsborough's portrait of *Lady Mary Carr*, reproduced by kind permission of Mr. Tooth, was wrongly entitled "Lady Ray."

obscured by absurdities, and lost sight of in the general irritation excited by his querulous foolishness. All contemporary evidence paints Thicknesse as a quarrelsome, self-sufficient busybody, whose vagaries were not even tempered by the good-nature which is supposed to go with folly. "He had in a remarkable degree," says Fulcher, "the faculty of lessening the number of his friends, and increasing the number of his enemies. He was perpetually imagining insult, and would sniff an injury from afar. . . . Contention was necessary to his existence." It seems undeniable, however, that he appreciated the genius of Gainsborough, and had a real affection for him, so far as his own splenetic temper allowed. He was by profession a soldier, and had gained some notoriety by a duel fought just after obtaining his commission. Later in life he thrust himself prominently before the world by a libel on his superior officer, for which he was imprisoned, by the publication of a series of *procès-verbaux*, setting forth his quarrels with various acquaintances and relatives, among others his own son and daughter-in-law, Lord and Lady Audley, and by a vindictory autobiography. The chance that brought him and Gainsborough together was his appointment, shortly after the painter's establishment at Ipswich, to the governorship of Landguard Fort, a military station opposite to Harwich, and close to the modern watering-place of Felixstowe. He himself gives the following account of this first meeting. Walking one day in the garden of a friend at Ipswich, he noticed a melancholy-looking countryman leaning with folded arms over the wall. The figure remained so long motionless that Thicknesse drew his friend's attention to it, who gravely replied that the man had been there all day, and he thought he must be a madman. On stepping nearer to accost the supposed lunatic, Thicknesse perceived him to be the simulacrum of a man, painted on a shaped wooden board. It was, in fact, an enlarged replica of that portrait of Tom Peartree, the story of which has been already told.¹

Struck by the truth and vigour of this painted hoax, Thicknesse at once obtained the artist's address and paid him a visit. "Mr. Gains-

¹ This curious relic is still in existence. It was unearthed in an old summer-house in Gainsborough's garden at Ipswich long after his death, and was included in the exhibition of the artist's works at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885. See the excellent annotated Catalogue of that exhibition, by Mr. F. G. Stephens.

borough," he says, "received me in his painting-room, in which stood several portraits, truly drawn, perfectly like, but stiffly painted and worse coloured. Among them was the late Admiral Vernon's, for it was not many years after he had taken Portobello, with six ships only; but when I turned my eyes to his little landscapes and drawings I



Landscape.

was charmed; these were his works of fancy, and gave him infinite delight."

Thickness now poured out upon the painter the doubtful treasure of his despotic affection. He began by commissioning a view of Landguard Fort, with Harwich in the distance. With this, for which he paid fifteen guineas, he was so delighted that he had it engraved by Major. The print is still in existence, but the picture, having

been hung upon a wall built with salt-water mortar, was injured out of existence. Thicknesse, of course, mixed by right with all the neighbouring gentry, and it seems probable that he really exerted himself to get commissions for his friend. The arrogance of his claim to be Gainsborough's only discriminating patron has led perhaps to his over-contemptuous treatment by the painter's biographers. However this may be, commissions for sketches of country-houses and portraits of their owners began to flow in freely at about this date. The artist, too, became a most welcome guest in the homes of his patrons. “His affable manners,” says a contemporary, “endeared him to all with whom his profession brought him into contact, either at the cottage or the castle. There was that peculiar bearing which could not fail to leave a pleasing impression. Many houses in Suffolk, as well as in the neighbouring county, were always open to him, and their owners thought it an honour to entertain him. I have seen the aged features of the peasantry lit up with a grateful recollection of his many acts of kindness and benevolence.” The love of music and whimsical passion for all kinds of musical instruments, so marked in later years, were already beginning to declare themselves at this date. A fiddle lent by Thicknesse was practised upon with such ardour “that although,” says the governor, “he had then never touched a musical instrument, before I got my fiddle home again he had made such proficiency in music that I would as soon have painted against him as have attempted to fiddle against him.” This is the more remarkable if, as William Jackson the musician asserted in later years, “though possessed of ear, taste, and genius, he never had application enough to learn his notes.” For a musical club to which he belonged at Ipswich, he painted a portrait group of the members. Mr. Strutt, its owner in the time of Fulcher, thus describes it : “Though very slight and unfinished, it is exceedingly spirited, and is the more interesting as it was composed from memory. Immediately in front of the spectator are the portraits of Gainsborough himself, and his friend Captain Clarke, who is leaning familiarly on the painter's shoulder. The heads of both are turned towards Wood, a dancing master, who is playing on the violin, accompanied on the violoncello by one Mills. The latter figure is merely outlined,

Gainsborough declaring that he ‘could not recollect the expression of his phiz.’ Gibbs, on the opposite side of the table, which is standing in the centre, is sound asleep. There is a sly piece of satire in this, he being the only real musician in the party, and his sleeping would seem to indicate that the performance is not of first-rate quality. It is a candlelight scene, and, by the condition of the table, some degree of conviviality appears to have prevailed. Gainsborough has his glass in his hand, that of Gibbs stands before him, as also Clarke’s, and one is overturned. A couple of lights are placed on each side of the music-stand, before which are two performers. The portrait of Gainsborough possesses much grace, and is very like that exhibited at the British Institution many years ago. He is dressed in a dark claret-coloured coat. . . . When Gainsborough was leaving Ipswich his friends expressed a wish to have some memorial of his pencil that I have been describing came to my father’s hands.” All through life Gainsborough was a lavish distributor of his work among his friends, which makes it all the more remarkable that his worst quarrel with Thicknesse arose through failure to present the latter with his portrait.

GAINSBOROUGH AT BATH.

IT was in 1760 that Gainsborough took his first decisive step towards fame and fortune. His growing facility and the popularity he had won so easily in Suffolk, had given him confidence, and he felt that his powers demanded a wider field. The fame of Reynolds (who in this same year “raised his prices to twenty-five guineas (for a head), and began to lay the foundations of a fortune”) may have roused his emulation. He determined to migrate to Bath, then in the heyday of fashion. Thicknesse does not forget to proclaim himself once more the *deus ex machinā*. “It was I who dragged him from the obscurity of a country town, at a time when all his neighbours were as ignorant of his great talents as he was himself!” Thicknesse, in fact, owned a house in Bath, to which he paid annual visits. Among the beaux and belles of the gay watering-place he foresaw sitters galore for his friend. So sanguine was the painter himself, that anxious to make his *début* in style, he took a lodging in the then new and fashionable Circus, at a rental of £50 a year; greatly to the alarm of his prudent wife, who may be pardoned for thinking it a rather sudden leap from the modest six pounds per annum they had paid for their house at Ipswich. Eager to retain his hold upon the artist, Thicknesse proposed that the Bath campaign should be inaugurated by a portrait of himself, to serve as a decoy duck for other customers. Only one sitting, however, was given, for somewhat to the patron’s chagrin, the painter found he had no need of such manœuvres to secure a *clientèle*. Rumours of his talent spread rapidly. His studio was soon besieged with fashionable sitters, and beginning with the modest charge of five guineas a head, he

was before long enabled, or rather compelled, to raise his prices to forty or a half, and a hundred guineas for a whole length. The adumbration



The Duchess of Grafton.

of Thicknesse was turned to the wall, and Gainsborough began to show symptoms of recalcitrance under the dictatorial benevolence of his

Mæcenas. All such signs of revolt Thicknesse attributed, rightly enough most likely, to his bugbear, Mrs. Gainsborough.

Gainsborough's almost invariable neglect to sign and date his works makes it difficult to trace the precise course of his development. It would be easy to fix the sequence of his pictures if we had them all before us, but for actual dates we have to rely upon the scanty evidence left by his contemporaries. Exhibition catalogues give little help, for, after the fashion of the day, his sitters figure not by name, but under such headings as "Portrait of a Lady," "Portrait of a Gentleman," "A Lady of Quality." And it is not until the year 1761, when Gainsborough sent a picture to the second public exhibition of works of art held in this country, that even these slender scraps of information are available. Between 1743, the earliest date which occurs on work of his, and 1761, we have to depend entirely upon a few passages in the letters of his friends and of Horace Walpole. Fortunately the development of his style was so logical, continuous, and clear, that no difficulty can be felt in fitting those pictures, whether portraits or landscapes, which come under our notice, into their true chronological order.

In 1760 the leading artists of the capital formed themselves into a society, and established an annual exhibition, in imitation of continental academies. "They please themselves much," writes Dr. Johnson in an often quoted letter to Baretti, "with the multitude of spectators, and imagine that the English school will rise much in reputation."

Gainsborough's name is not among the contributors to the exhibition in its first year, and this taken in conjunction with an extant letter of Mr. Kirby's, dated 1759, and addressed to his son, shortly after placing the youth with Gainsborough at Ipswich, strengthens the contention that the move to Bath took place, not in 1758, as asserted by Cunningham, but in 1760. Gainsborough, the fashionable portrait-painter of Bath, is hardly likely to have been an absentee from the first representative gathering of English art, though this may well have been the case with the obscure genius of Ipswich. In 1761 he was represented by a full-length of Mr. Nugent, afterwards Lord Clare, and the following year by a portrait of Mr. Poyntz of Bath. To the fourth year's show he sent a large landscape, and two male portraits, one being that of Quin the actor, who is said to have been not very willing to



T. Gainsborough RA Pinx

-Walter L. Colla Ph. Sc.

Portrait of a Lady.

sit, until the painter worked upon his vanity by the laughing assertion : “ If you let me paint you, I shall live for ever ! ” Among the more



Portrait of David Garrick.

memorable portraits of his sojourn in Bath were those of David Garrick (whom he painted altogether five times), General Honywood, an equestrian portrait in a scarlet uniform, with a fine landscape background

(exhibited in 1765), Lady Grosvenor, and John, Duke of Argyle (exhibited 1767), Lady Sussex, Lord and Lady Ligonier (exhibited 1771), Lord Camden, Cramer the metallurgist, Laurence Sterne, and Samuel Richardson, besides a crowd of lesser celebrities. Concerning the first Garrick portrait, a story is current, versions of which have been told of other actors and their limners. Gainsborough is said to have had great difficulty in catching the likeness, being perplexed by the actor's extraordinary mobility of feature. In the space of a few minutes his face took on the likeness of half a dozen notabilities of the day. "Rot them for a couple of rogues," exclaimed the painter, referring to this and to a kindred display by Foote, "they have everyone's faces but their own!" The portrait of Garrick was nevertheless successfully accomplished, and Mrs. Garrick pronounced it "the best portrait ever painted of her Davy." It is now in the town-hall of Stratford-on-Avon, presented, according to the popular account, by Garrick himself, although on this point there is a conflict of evidence, an item in the municipal accounts for 1769 being: "£63 paid to Mr. Gainsborough for Mr. Garrick's picture."

While thus busy with his brush, Gainsborough had frequent need of the services of the public carrier between Bath and London, one Wiltshire, to transport a portrait to its owner, or a case of pictures to the exhibition. So great was Wiltshire's admiration for the artist, that he could never be induced to accept payment. "No, no," he protested, "I love painting too much." Finding at last that Gainsborough's pride was uneasy under the obligation, he proposed a compromise. "When you think," said the carrier, "that I have carried to the value of a little painting, I beg you will let me have one, Sir, and I shall be more than paid." Several of such acknowledgments were made, and descended as heirlooms to Wiltshire's son. They show Gainsborough to have been not behind his friend in generosity. Among them was the beautiful landscape, *The Return from Harvest*, in which Wiltshire's own waggon, a favourite horse he had proposed to Gainsborough as a model, and the artist's two daughters, as peasant girls, are introduced. The portrait of Orpin, parish clerk of Bradford-on-Avon, now in the National Gallery, was another of these payments.

Gainsborough, unlike the great rival of his later years, made no

incursions into the ideal. The poetry that informs his work was intimate and personal ; he had no yearnings after “the great manner.”



Lord North.

“It is to the credit of his good sense and judgment,” said Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his famous eulogium of his dead *confrère*, “that he never

did attempt that style of historical painting, for which his previous studies had made no preparation. Neither did he destroy the character and uniformity of his own style by the idle affectation of introducing mythological learning into any of his pictures." The nearest approach to such an attempt was a projected allegorical portrait of Shakespeare for the 1769 Jubilee at Stratford-on-Avon. A letter to Garrick, dated 1768, shows how uncongenial was the essay. It is also a good specimen of Gainsborough's lively and trenchant style in correspondence.

"BATH, 22 August, 1768.

"DEAR SIR,—I doubt I stand accused (if not accursed) all this time for my neglect in not going to Stratford, and giving you a line from thence as I promised ; but what can one do such weather as this—continual raining? My genius is so damped by it, that I can do nothing to please me. I have been several days rubbing in and rubbing out my design of Shakespeare, and hang me if I think I shall let it go, or let you see it at least. I was willing, like an ass as I am, to expose myself a little out of the simple portrait way, and had a notion of showing where that inimitable poet had his ideas from, by an immediate ray darting down upon his eye turned up for the purpose ; but confound it, I can make nothing of my ideas, there has been such a fall of rain from the same quarter. You shall not see it, for I will cut it before you can come.

"Tell me, dear Sir, when you purpose coming to Bath, that I may be quick enough in my motions. Shakespeare's bust is a silly smiling thing, and I have not sense enough to make him more sensible in the picture, and so I tell ye, you shall not see it. I must make a plain picture of him, standing erect, and give it an old look, as if it had been painted at the time he lived ; and there we shall fling 'em.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH."

By the time that the experiment of 1760 had led, after many strange proceedings, to the foundation of a "Royal Academy of Arts," the fame of Gainsborough had become so thoroughly established that he was found to be included in the thirty-six on whom the honour of membership was

bestowed. He had made many friends in all ranks, but his chief delight was in the society of the musicians and actors, who came to reap their periodical harvest at the gay watering-place. The proprietor of the Bath theatre, General Palmer, was among his intimates, and continually put a box at his disposal, in return for which civility Gainsborough, always lavish with his own productions, gave him several pictures. Many



Landscape.

virtuosi of his acquaintance were immortalized by portraits—Abel, the *viol-di-gamba* player; Giardini, the violinist; Fischer, the hautboy player, who afterwards became his son-in-law; Samuel Foote, and Edwin and John Henderson. Of Abel he painted a series of portraits. “Doubtless,” says a contemporary *chroniqueur*, “it was in exchange for the notes of his *viol-di-gamba* that he obtained so many drafts upon the

genius of the painter." For it was the painter's impulsive habit to reward his Orpheus of the moment with any picture he might happen to covet. Thus, he gave to Colonel Hamilton, a first-rate amateur who delighted him by a solo on the violin, his picture of a *Boy at a Stile*, which the Colonel had often tried in vain to buy. To William Jackson, the composer, we owe a whimsical account of the ardour with which Gainsborough, like a child discarding old toys for new ones, attacked one instrument after another, as he became successively acquainted with their professors. In one respect Jackson's statement is rather surprising. He says the painter never even learnt his notes !

"Happening at one time to see a theorbo in a picture of Vandyke's, Gainsborough concluded, because, perhaps, it was finely painted, that the theorbo must be a fine instrument. He recollects to have heard of a German professor, and, ascending to his garret, found him dining on roasted apples and smoking his pipe, with his theorbo beside him.

"'I am come to buy your lute—name your price, and here's the money.'

"'I cannot sell my lute —'

"'No; not for a guinea or two? But you must sell it, I tell you.'

"'My lute is worth much money ; it is worth ten guineas.'

"'Ay! that it is. See, here's the money.'

"So saying, he took up the instrument, laid down the price, went halfway down the stair, and returned.

"'I have done but half my errand ; what is your lute worth if I have not your book ?'

"'What book, Master Gainsborough ?'

"'Why, the book of airs you have composed for the lute.'

"'Ah, sir, I can never part with my book !'

"'Pooh! you can make another at any time. This is the book I mean. There's ten guineas for it; so, once more, good day !'

"He went down a few steps, and returned again.

"'What use is your book to me if I don't understand it? And your lute, you may take it again if you won't teach me to play on it. Come home with me, and give me the first lesson.'

"'I will come to-morrow.'

"'You must come now.'

“‘I must dress myself.’

“‘For what? You are the best figure I have seen to-day.’

“‘I must shave, sir.’

“‘I honour your beard!’

“‘I must, however, put on my wig.’

“‘Damn your wig! Your cap and beard become you. Do you think if Vandyke was to paint you, he’d let you be shaved?’

“In this manner he frittered away his musical talents, and though possessed of ear, taste, and genius, he never had application enough to learn his notes. He scorned to take the first step; the second was of course out of his reach, and the summit became unattainable.”

Prosperous in his career, and happy in his home and friends, Gainsborough seems to have spent nearly fourteen years at Bath before the thought of a yet wider field for his powers took any great hold on his mind. And yet he must long have felt himself fit to try conclusions with the foremost painters of his day, even with the redoubtable Sir Joshua himself. The explanation of his long quiescence seems to be merely want of ambition. His art gave him all he wanted; it filled his pockets and left him free, when painting hours were over, to indulge his taste for music and for the harmless forms of riotous living in which his evenings were passed. Thicknesse, according to his own account, spurred him out of Ipswich, and now again it is through the same irrepressible patron that we find him preparing for a second move. This time, however, the governor is not a voluntary agent. It is by fastening a quarrel upon his friend—if we take the less favourable view of his conduct—that he drives him to strike his tents and be off. The reader may remember that a certain portrait of Thicknesse had been set aside at the beginning of Gainsborough’s practice in Bath. Of Mrs. Thicknesse he had painted a successful picture, which he gave to her husband, saying, “It has done me service, and I know it will give you pleasure.” The lady cherished a desire for her husband’s likeness as a pendant to her own, but Gainsborough, capricious as he was generous, for some reason always evaded the commission. It happened, however, that Mrs. Thicknesse, who had some skill in music, owned a *viol-di-gamba* of exquisite quality with the date of 1612 upon it. Gainsborough was just then at the height of his passion for the instrument, and this viol kept

him awake o' nights. Finally he went so far as to offer a hundred guineas for it. Thicknesse, according to his own account, thereupon privily



The Baillie Family.

desired his wife to present it to the painter. The Gainsboroughs were invited to sup, and after the meal, the artist was begged to play one of his friend Abel's lessons to the company. At the end of his performance,

Mrs. Thicknesse told him he had played so charmingly as to deserve the instrument for his own, and duly asked his acceptance of it, adding, however, "At your leisure give me in exchange my husband's picture to hang beside my own." The next morning—according to one account, he took it away in his coach—the *viol-di-gamba* was sent to its new owner, and Gainsborough sketched in the outline of a fresh portrait of his friend.

So far the version of Thicknesse and of the Gainsborough family tally, but they differ in the sequel. Thicknesse declares that Gainsborough became embittered against him by a malicious piece of tale-bearing, in which he was falsely accused of having said that the Gainsboroughs' two children ran about the streets of Ipswich without shoes and stockings, when he first knew them. The painter, he declares, thereupon turned the portrait to the wall, and even outraged Mrs. Thicknesse's feelings by ostentatiously displaying a full length of Fischer, gorgeous in scarlet and gold, which he had begun and finished after putting aside her husband, on one of her visits to the studio. Much incensed, the lady urged her lord to remonstrate. He did so with some bitterness, claiming the fulfilment of the bargain, or, as an alternative, the delivery of the portrait as it was. Gainsborough at once packed up both viol and picture and sent them home.

So says Thicknesse. From the Gainsborough side we get a detail which puts a different complexion on the whole business. It appears that the *viol-di-gamba* was not a gift at all, but that the painter put a hundred guineas into Mrs. Thicknesse's hand, privately, as payment for it. This piece of information is not based, however, on thoroughly satisfactory evidence. Allan Cunningham had it from a member of Gainsborough's family. The whole story is one of which it is impossible to know exactly the rights at this distance of time. The sort of careless generosity, which was such a marked characteristic of the painter, is by no means inconsistent with the conduct of which Thicknesse accuses him, and it is quite possible that distaste for the governor as a sitter and a growing sense of his endowments as a well-meaning incubus, blinded Gainsborough to the obligations he had taken upon himself.

Reasonably or not, the Thicknesses conceived themselves deeply aggrieved. The offending sketch was returned to its author, with a note requesting him to "take his brush, and first rub out the countenance of

the truest and warmest friend he ever had, and so done, then blot him for ever from his memory." Gainsborough no doubt hailed the final rupture with relief. He resolved to remove himself from the possibility of further discomfort, and suddenly made up his mind to quit Bath for London. His faithful ally, Wiltshire, undertook the transport of his household goods, and in the summer of 1774 he settled in the capital.

GAINSBOROUGH IN LONDON

IN London, as at Bath, Gainsborough thought a good appearance half the battle. Echoes may have reached him of how Reynolds, when he migrated to the fashionable quarter of Leicester Fields, set up a gilded coach and servants with liveries laced with silver. At any rate he determined to make such proclamation of his own importance as was implied in a large house in the best part of the town. He took the western wing of Schomberg House, in Pall Mall, at the considerable rent of £300 per annum. The other wing was tenanted by John Astley, an obscure portrait painter, who had mended his fortunes by marriage with a rich widow. In his pre-nuptial days Astley had been a fellow-pupil with Reynolds under Hudson, and had also been one of his intimate friends in Rome. He is perhaps best remembered by a comical anecdote belonging to that period of his life. An expedition into the country had been made by the band of students, and the day being hot, first one, and then another, took off his coat. Astley alone clung to his upper garment. The banter of his companions forced him at last to discard it, when the cause of his reluctance stood revealed. The poor wretch had been reduced to lining his waistcoat with an unsuccessful canvas, and a landscape with a foaming waterfall gave piquancy to his back !

In Gainsborough's portion of Schomberg House, such alterations and additions as would fit it for the reception of fashionable sitters were at once taken in hand. The painter had good grounds for reckoning on immediate success. Reynolds, with all his industry, could hardly keep pace with the demands on his brush. There was room, in fact,



Drawing of a Lady.

for any number of portrait painters. The richer men of the time had their features limned nearly as often as they would have had them photographed, had they come into the world a century later. Gainsborough had as little difficulty as Sir Joshua, Allan Ramsay, or Romney before him, in diverting a sufficient stream from the great river of patrons through his own front door. Thicknesse—whose name seems to have been curiously descriptive of his own skin!—was determined, in spite of the snubbings he had received, to retain his self-appointed *rôle* of guardian angel. He wrote to Lord Bateman, recommending the painter to his kind consideration; and as the peer honoured the draught on his good nature, Thicknesse was enabled to add the triumphs of Gainsborough's last ten years to the list of his own good deeds!

The triumphs began at once. Not many months passed before the King summoned Gainsborough to Buckingham Palace. George III. had noticed and greatly admired the painter's work at the annual exhibitions. A family group of the King, Queen, and three Princesses, turned the current of fashion strongly towards Pall Mall. It was the first of a series of commissions from Buckingham Palace, where Gainsborough became a constant visitor, and as the Princess Augusta afterwards told a younger artist, "a great favourite with all the Royal family." He painted every member of the King's house (several many times over), with the one exception of the Duke of York, whose portrait was never executed, though often projected. His portraits of the Queen were among his greatest triumphs. "Gainsborough," it has been remarked, "made even our old Queen Charlotte look picturesque." As a Tory of the orthodox type, he was personally more acceptable to the King than Reynolds, who, Whig as he was, stood to a certain degree suspect in the Royal mind, and was naturally drawn to the Prince of Wales' faction, and the society of Carlton House.

The King's example was speedily followed by lesser magnates. Between 1773 and 1777 the painter refrained from exhibiting with the Royal Academy, though busily at work. The cause of his abstention is said to have been some trifling disagreement with the President, with whom his relations never became cordial. Among Sir Joshua's many good qualities, a generous acceptance of rival claims cannot be numbered. Never quarrelsome or undignified, he nevertheless seems to have found it

hard to show cordiality to any one who at all encroached on what he thought his own domain, and his frigid politeness or grudging approval were speedily resented. It is the fashion to talk of Reynolds as if his character were very open, transparent, and easily understood. To me, I confess, it has always seemed just the reverse. His contemporaries leave us in no doubt as to his kindness, good temper, and general clubability. On the other hand, the sidelights through which he passes show him as a man in whom the strong feelings of those built differently from himself caused a discomfort he was apt to resent on its authors. Gainsborough, who was impulse personified, must have *lui donné sur les nerfs* in an extreme degree. It appears certain that open discourtesies were entirely on Gainsborough's side. He neglected to attend the Academy meetings, never appeared at the periodical dinners, and, as we have seen, withheld his contributions on very trivial grounds. On one occasion he asked Reynolds to sit for his portrait. After one sitting Sir Joshua was obliged to leave London for the sake of his health. On his return he let Gainsborough know that he was back in Leicester Square. Gainsborough's only response was, that he was glad to hear Sir Joshua had recovered. He never again touched the portrait. The two were unsympathetic, but each felt the greatness of his rival, and bore witness to it in unprejudiced moments. Alluding to the deterioration of Reynolds's works, due to his injudicious experiments with pigments, Gainsborough declared that nevertheless "Sir Joshua's pictures in their most decayed state were better than those of any other artist when in their best." Sir Joshua's posthumous panegyric on his rival will be mentioned in its place. It must be confessed, too, that he did not always withhold his applause while that rival was still alive and active.

The exhibited works of Gainsborough, taking those which appeared at the Royal Academy and its forerunner, the Society of Arts, amount to but a few over a hundred. Of his productiveness, however, this gives no fair measure. A large proportion of his pictures never figured in the official exhibitions. As we have seen, a hiatus of four years occurs in the list of his contributions to the Academy, during the early part of his residence in London. Between 1777 and 1783 he contributed regularly, on one occasion sending as many as ten pictures. After 1783, for a reason to be given presently, his name disappears from the

catalogue. It is probable that the complete catalogue of his works would run to a total of seven or eight hundred.

Among the sitters who now flocked to Gainsborough's studio were famous beauties, such as Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, whom he had painted in 1763 as Miss Georgiana Spencer, a child of six years old, Mrs. Siddons, and Mrs. Sheridan; and men both of fashion and action, such as Colonel St. Leger, Colonel Tarleton, General Conway, Sir Harbord Harbord, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Sandwich, Lord Clive, Edmund Burke, Bishop Hurd, and Sheridan himself. Supreme as he was in the rendering of high-bred loveliness, Gainsborough's skill seems to some extent to have failed him in his two essays with the Duchess of Devonshire. He was dazzled rather than inspired by her beauty and vivacity, and declared despondently that "her Grace was too hard" for him. The first portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1778. Walpole pronounced it "very bad and washy." Gainsborough was himself so little satisfied with it that he drew a wet brush across the mouth, refused to send it home to Chatsworth, and is said to have afterwards destroyed it. The second portrait appeared at the Royal Academy in 1783. It is generally assumed to be identical with the famous "*lost Duchess*," bought by Messrs. Agnew, at the Wynn Ellis sale of 1876, for £10,605, which was shortly afterwards cut out of the frame, and carried off by some still-undiscovered thief. Doubts, however, have been cast with some degree of probability, on the authenticity of this too famous portrait.

On the exquisite portrait of Mrs. Siddons, now in the National Gallery, the painter seems to have lavished more research than was usual with a painter of his extraordinary facility. The nose especially, he repeatedly altered, at last exclaiming in comic wrath: "Damn your nose, madam, there's no end to it!" In the softer loveliness of Mrs. Sheridan, "that beautiful mother of a beautiful race," the St. Cecilia of Reynolds, he found a type no less sympathetic than objectively perfect. He is scarcely to be seen to greater advantage than in his various portraits of her. If I had to select a single picture to represent Gainsborough, I think I should choose the small canvas at Knole, on which the painter has united the portraits of Maria Linley and her no less handsome brother.

The years 1775 and 1776, which followed Gainsborough's arrival in London, seem to have brought a large addition to his income. The only cloud was the death of his brother Humphrey, under circumstances already described. His letters to his sister, Mrs. Gibbon, dwell pleasantly on the details of his increasing prosperity. A coach was set up, which, however, was afterwards put down. In one of his letters the painter makes a sly allusion to the satisfaction of his wife and daughters in the new possession. "My family," he writes, "had a great desire to make a journey to Ipswich, to Mr. and Mrs. Kilderbee's, for a fortnight, and last Sunday morning I packed them off in their own coach, with David on horseback; and Molly (the younger of his two daughters) wrote to me to let me know that they arrived very safe—but somehow or other they seem desirous of returning rather sooner than the proposed time, as they desire me to go for them by next Tuesday; the bargain was that I should fetch them home. I don't know what's the matter; either people don't pay them honour enough for ladies that keep a coach, or else Madam is afraid to trust me alone in this great town."

The year 1777 was signalised by his return to the Academic fold. He exhibited some half dozen portraits and a large landscape. Among the portraits were whole-lengths of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, Lord Gage, and Abel, the musician; the latter, a fine work, which was afterwards in the possession of the Earl of Egremont. The catalogue for 1778 shows the largest number of pictures hitherto contributed; they included the first *Duchess of Devonshire*, and a fine portrait of Christie, the founder of the famous firm of auctioneers. In the following year a letter to Mrs. Gibbon says: "My present situation, with regard to encouragement, &c., is all that heart can wish, and I live at a full thousand pounds a year expense."

It is now pretty generally agreed that the famous *Blue Boy*, perhaps the most widely known of all Gainsboroughs, belongs to the year 1779, and that the tradition of its origin is authentic. The contention that it was painted so early as 1770 appears to rest on no more solid foundation than the fact that Gainsborough in that year contributed to the Royal Academy a *Portrait of a Young Gentleman*, to which Mary Moser, in a letter to Fuseli, thus alludes: "Gainsborough is beyond himself in a portrait of a gentleman in a Vandyke habit." Several



T. Gainsborough RA Pinx

Walter Colls Ph.Sc.

The Blue Boy

other portraits are extant to which these words of the lady R.A. would apply. In the more popular version, which refers it to 1779, the picture figures as the painted refutation of a dictum of Sir Joshua's, and the story agrees so well with what we know of both men that we cling to our right of belief.

Gainsborough, influenced perhaps by the example of Vandyke, the master he admired above all others, had a great fondness for blue. In the majority of his better works the tint in question plays an important part. The most conspicuous exception I can call to mind is the *Mrs. Graham* at Edinburgh, where a warm crimson holds the place he so often gave to the cooler tint. In the *Lady Sheffield*, the *Mrs. Siddons*, the *Lady Bate Dudley*, the *Mrs. Beaufoy*, the *Duchess of Richmond*, and a host of others, blues of more or less coolness occupy the centre of the canvas. Nothing is more likely than that Reynolds had this peculiarity in his mind, when he laid down the following maxims in his celebrated "Eighth Discourse," delivered to the students of the Royal Academy in December, 1778 :—

"It ought, in my opinion, to be indispensably observed that the masses of light in a picture be always of a warm, mellow colour, yellow, red, or a yellowish white, and that the blue, the gray, or the green colours be kept almost entirely out of these masses, and be used only to support and set off these warm colours ; and for this purpose, a small proportion of cold colours will be found sufficient. Let this conduct be reversed : let the light be cold, and the surrounding colours warm, and it will be out of the power of art, even in the hands of Rubens or Titian, to make a picture splendid or harmonious."

It will be seen that Reynolds banishes to subordinate positions exactly the colours—blue, gray, and green—which had already been used by Gainsborough to focus many a masterpiece. The latter retorted by the superb bravura of *Master Buttall*, in which he showed that he, at all events, if not Rubens or Titian, could make a picture splendid and harmonious with a cold colour in its chief light. Knowing what we do of Reynolds, it seems to me almost certain that he had Gainsborough in his mind when he composed the above sentences, and that in provoking the *Blue Boy* he was actually hoist with his own pétard.

Gainsborough's model for the *Blue Boy* was Jonathan Buttall the

younger, the son of a rich wholesale ironmonger in Greek Street, Soho, for whom the artist painted several pictures. After the death of the younger Buttall, the picture was bought by a Mr. Nesbit. There is some obscurity as to its further vicissitudes, but it is believed to have passed from Nesbit to the Prince of Wales, who for some reason, handed it over to Hoppner the painter. Hoppner eventually sold it to Earl Grosvenor, from whom it has descended to the present Duke of Westminster. It is now in Grosvenor House, London.

The *Blue Boy* was perhaps not completed very early in the year, or, if it was, Gainsborough refrained from so pointed a challenge as its public exhibition would have involved. He was well represented at the Academy, however, by portraits of the Duchesses of Cumberland and Gloucester, of the Duke of Argyle and Judge Perrin, and by portraits of Two Ladies. In 1780, the year of the first exhibition at Somerset House, he contributed in all fifteen works : nine portraits, among them those of General Conway and the notorious editor of the *Morning Post*, “‘Parson’ Bate,” afterwards Sir H. Bate Dudley, Bart.;¹ and six landscapes, for, though his portraits now divided the favour of the town with those of Reynolds and Romney, he had not forsaken his early love. Two or three of his rustic scenes always accompanied his other works to the Academy. But landscape was little tasted by the buying public of the day. Richard Wilson was, literally, selling his productions for bread and cheese. The greater number of Gainsborough’s pastorals remained in his studio at his death. “They stood ranged in long lines from his hall to his painting-room,” says Sir William Beechey, “and those who came to sit for their portraits rarely deigned to honour them with a look as they passed along.” Gainsborough, in short, suffered the fate of most pioneers. He was the first English painter to reject all classic conventions, and frankly reproduce the beauty of his native land. “L’initiateur en paysage,” says the writer who has perhaps done more than any other towards the recognition of the English School in France, “fut Gainsborough, qui anima ses vues de la campagne anglaise par des scènes rustiques ou des paysanneries. Morland et Constable procèdent de lui.” Between these multitudinous “rustic scenes” it would be impossible to differentiate in the text. The apparent theme is constantly repeated with but slight

¹ Gainsborough painted a second picture of him in a landscape with his dog.

variation, the true subject being the rendering of some effect of light, of clouds, of masses of foliage. The examples perhaps most widely



Drawing of a Man.

known either by description or reproduction are the so-called *Cottage Door*, now in the collection of the Duke of Westminster; the *Cottage Girl with her Dog and Pitcher*; the two beautiful landscapes in the

National Gallery known as Gainsborough's *Forest* and *The Market Cart*; and *The Girl with Pigs*, a subject the artist repeated four times. The original, now in Lord Carlisle's collection at Castle Howard, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1782, and was bought by Reynolds for one hundred guineas, the price fixed by the painter being only sixty. The *Shepherd Boy in a Shower*, and its pendant, the *Woodman in the Storm*, should also be named. The beauties of the last we can now judge only by prints and copies. Remaining in the artist's possession till his death, it was bought at his sale by Lord Gainsborough, and was destroyed when his house was burnt some years later. Two other landscapes are of interest, as being among the very few commissions Gainsborough received in this branch of his art. They were companion pieces, representing peasants returning from market, with waggons, etc., against a rich background of trees, and were painted for the Prince of Wales, who presented them to Mrs. Fitzherbert. For the pair Gainsborough is said to have received the then enormous price of two thousand guineas.

There were some, indeed, to whom Gainsborough's landscapes were something more than the triflings of a man of genius. The discerning few appreciated them, but this minority could not stem the tide of popular taste. Reynolds greatly admired his landscapes, "the grace of which," he said, "was not academical or antique, but selected from the great school of Nature." The President, who has been accused, not altogether without reason, of a pronounced hostility both to Wilson and Gainsborough, may in these praises have wrapped up an implied censure on the classicality of Wilson; he may also have insisted on Gainsborough's qualities as a landscape painter, with the idea that he thus somewhat discounted his rival's claims to equality with himself in the other *genre*. He is said to have greatly incensed Wilson at an Academy meeting, by pointedly proposing the health of Gainsborough as "the best living landscape painter," provoking from Wilson the famous retort : "and the best portrait painter too." But whatever may have been the motives underlying the President's admiration, he gave a substantial proof of sincerity by becoming a purchaser, as we have seen. Horace Walpole was also enthusiastic in his praises. The large landscape exhibited in 1777, he pronounced to be "in the style of Rubens, and by far the finest landscape ever painted in England, and



Portrait of a Lady.

equal to the great masters." That Caliban of criticism, Dr. Wolcot, better known as Peter Pindar, in a doggerel, "Ode to the Royal Academicians," paid Gainsborough the somewhat left-handed compliment of exhorting him to pursue his charming "forte" (*i.e.*, landscape), and leave portraits alone!

The year 1780 was marked by one of the few *contrestemps* that disturbed the painter's family peace. Mention has been made of Johann Christian Fischer, the hautboy player, as one of the musicians whose society Gainsborough cultivated. A frequent guest, he had naturally been thrown much into contact with the painter's two beautiful daughters, and an attachment sprang up between him and the younger, Mary. It was not one which Gainsborough or his wife approved, not merely because of the suitor's position in life, but because he was known to be of an irritable and eccentric character. The parents were, however, overruled, and the marriage took place, but was not happy. The couple were separated after a few years. Mrs. Fischer's mind became unhinged. She suffered from curious delusions, one of which was that the Prince of Wales was in love with her. She survived both her parents and her unmarried sister, however, and died about 1825. Margaret, the elder daughter, seems to have had some touch of a similar infirmity, shown in strange peculiarities of temper. The taint is said to have been inherited from Mrs. Gainsborough, and to have manifested itself in her too at the close of her life.

In the following letter Gainsborough unburdened himself to his sister on the subject of the Fischer marriage:—

"February 23, 1780.

"DEAR SISTER,—I imagine you are by this time no stranger to the alteration which has taken place in my family. The notice I had of it was very sudden, as I had not the least suspicion of the attachment being so long and deeply settled; and as it was too late for me to alter anything, without being the cause of total unhappiness on both sides, my consent, which was a mere compliment to affect to ask, I needs must give; whether such a match was agreeable to me or not, I would not have the cause of unhappiness lie upon my conscience; and accordingly they were married last Monday, and are settled for the present in a ready-furnished

little house in Curzon-street, Mayfair. I can't say I have any reason to doubt the man's honesty or goodness of heart, as I never heard anyone speak anything amiss of him ; and as to his oddities and temper, she must learn to like those as she likes his person, for nothing can be altered now. I pray God she may be happy with him and have her health. Peggy has been very unhappy about it, but I endeavour to comfort her, in hope that she will have more pride and goodness than to do anything without first asking my advice and approbation. We shall see how they go on, and I shall write to you further upon the subject. I hope you are all well, and with best wishes,

"I remain your affectionate Brother,

"THOS. GAINSBOROUGH."

Of the years 1781 and 1782 little is recorded, its chief events being the pictures finished and exhibited—portraits of the King and Queen and of Bishop Hurd, *A Shepherd*, and the usual landscapes (three), in the former year ; in the latter, portraits of Colonel Tarleton, Miss Dalrymple, Madame Baccelli, several Ladies and Gentlemen, and the companion pair of the Prince of Wales and one of his boon companions, Colonel St. Leger, painted to be exchanged by the two sitters. That of the Colonel is now at Hampton Court. The landscapes were the *Girl and Pigs* and one other.

Gainsborough was greatly excited about this time by an exhibition of moving pictures got up by the painter, Philip de Loutherbourg, to illustrate the scenery of Great Britain. The *Eidophusikon*, as the Anglo-Alsatian called it, seems to have *émotionné* his fellow Academician much in the same way as a fine violin. He instantly set about making a small imitation, for which he painted with his own hand a series of landscapes on glass. These were only a few inches square, but they were executed with great delicacy and skill, and when properly shown as transparencies in a darkened room, must have had a charming effect. The machine with its slides was at the exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1785, and was afterwards in the possession of a London dealer. Two of the slides have been etched by Mons. Brunet Debaines.

In 1783, the last year of his appearance at the Royal Academy, Gainsborough was represented by no less than twenty-six pictures.



Portrait of Mrs. Siddons.

Fifteen of the number were portraits (heads only) of the Royal family—the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales, Prince William, the Princess Royal, Prince Edward, Princess Augusta, Princess Elizabeth, Prince Ernest, Prince Augustus Frederick, Prince Adolphus, Princess Mary, Princess Sophia, Prince Octavius, and Prince Alfred. Such a galaxy must have sadly tried the temper of Sir Joshua. Among the other portraits were the second *Duchess of Devonshire* and the *Mrs. Sheridan*, already referred to, *Lord Cornwallis*, the *Duke of Northumberland*, and *Lord Sandwich*. The list was varied by *A Landscape*, and a *paysannerie* representing *Two Shepherd Boys, with Fighting Dogs*. No wonder that after such continuous labour the painter felt the need of a holiday. He started off with his friend Mr. Kilderbee for a trip to the Cumberland lakes, seeking refreshment in the study of new scenes. "I purpose to mount all the lakes at the next exhibition, in the great style," he wrote to a friend just before starting. But in "the next exhibition" Gainsborough was conspicuous only by his absence. Among the works sent in for it was his famous group of George III.'s daughters—the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth. It had been painted for Carlton House, for a specified place on the panelled walls of one of the state-rooms, and its execution had been determined to some extent by its destination. By the rules of the Royal Academy no full-length portrait is allowed to hang on the line. But Gainsborough, solicitous for his masterpiece and conscious that much of its delicate charm would be lost by undue elevation, not unreasonably put in a plea that an exception might, on this occasion, be made in his favour. He even, says a contemporary newspaper, agreed to accept inferior positions for his other contributions, on condition that this particular picture had some indulgence shown it. Taking into account the distinction both of artist and sitters, the great beauty of the work, and the open secret of the rivalry between Gainsborough and the President, especially as regards Court patronage, it would have been no less graceful than magnanimous if the Council had given way in the matter. But they were inexorable, and Gainsborough, greatly angered, withdrew the whole of his contributions, and could never again be prevailed upon to send a picture to the Royal Academy. He has been much censured for his conduct in this respect. But it must be allowed that he was ungenerously treated, more

especially as it seems quite certain that the rule in question was not always so rigorously enforced. To console himself for his isolation, he opened an exhibition at his own house, an experiment which seems to have had little success. A more efficacious medicine for his wounded feelings was found in a summer visit to his native borough, where his fine clothes, his cocked hat, his good look , and gay manners delighted his former intimates.

Gainsborough retained his affection for the country throughout his London career, but his constant occupation made it difficult for him to enjoy its pleasures. In the summer he was obliged to content himself with lodgings at Richmond or at Hampstead, where he spent his time in sketching out of doors, or in beguiling young rustics to pose as models. It was at Richmond he captured the handsome peasant boy, Jack Hill, who figures in so many of his landscapes. He received this lad into his house, and promised to provide for his future. But the young gipsy proved an ungrateful *protégé*.

In the four years of life that remained to him after his rupture with the Academy, Gainsborough's powers showed no hint of decay. His art indeed seems to have touched its highest point of development in one or two examples from this time. The portrait of Mrs. Siddons was painted in 1784, the *View of the Mall in St. James's Park* in 1786, the *Woodman in the Storm* in 1787. The exact dates of *The Cottage Door* and the *Cottage Girl with her Dog and Pitcher* are not known, but they also belong to this last period.

The *Mrs. Siddons* is perhaps too well known to need description. It is often called the painter's masterpiece, and in certain qualities it has never been surpassed. The drawing, especially, has a decision not common in Gainsborough's work ; the design is unusually well digested —to use a graphic if uncomfortable term—and the colour is in parts superb. Unfortunately the red curtain in the background is not absolutely in tune with the blues and buffs of the lady's costume. Possibly this may be due to changes in the pigments, although I do not think so. I fancy rather that Gainsborough was not very sure of himself when red was in question. Several other pictures could be named in which that tint is not quite at peace with the cooler ones about it. In spite, however, of this little blemish, the distinction—so marvellously

rendered—of the sitter, the fine design, and the exquisite colour of its more important parts, make the picture in the National Gallery one of the greatest portraits of women ever painted. Nearly forty years ago, when it was at the Manchester Exhibition of 1857, it moved the late Théophile Thoré to write of it thus:—

“Le profil, dessiné avec la plus fière assurance, a quelque chose de



The Watering Place.

sibyllin, de fatalement passionné. La grande tragédienne, qui traduisait les passions avec tant d'énergie et de sensibilité, et qui les éprouvait si vivement pour son compte, est mieux rendue dans ce simple portrait à mi-corps et en négligé, que dans ses portraits allégoriques en muse tragique ou sous les déguisements de ses rôles d'actrice. Ce portrait est si original, si individuel, comme expression de caractère poétique,

comme parti pris de tournure, comme audace de couleur, comme liberté de touche, qu'il ne ressemble à la peinture d'aucun maître. On a beau lui chercher des analogues, on n'en trouve point : Véronèse, un peu. Mais non, c'est une création toute singulière. Voilà du génie ! Il faudrait au Louvre cette Mrs. Siddons, avec Miss O'Brien ! ”¹

As for the *View in the Mall, St. James's Park*, it is no hyperbole to say with Hazlitt that it rivals Watteau in his happiest moments—"all in motion and flutter like a lady's fan." Among the trees and benches of the park a fashionable assembly groups itself round the central figures of the Royal party. In execution the picture combines the beauties of such a portrait as that *Mrs. Beaufoy* which Mr. Alfred de Rothschild has so kindly allowed us to reproduce in these pages, and such a landscape as the *Watering Place* of the National Gallery, or the *Cottage Door*, at Grosvenor House, or the superb *Harvest Waggon*, which was offered at Christie's some few weeks ago by Mr. Gibbons. The *View in the Mall* is the artistic temperament made visible.

In 1787 Gainsborough seems to have had one of those strange premonitions of approaching death, of which so many instances are asserted. Allan Cunningham, who is responsible for the story, shall give his own version of it :—

" Though Gainsborough was not partial to the society of literary men, he seems to have been acquainted with Johnson and Burke ; and he lived on terms of great affection with Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He was also a welcome visitor at the table of Sir George Beaumont, a gentleman of graceful manners, who lived in old English dignity, and was besides a lover of literature and a painter of landscape. The latter loved to relate a curious anecdote of Gainsborough, which marks the unequal spirits of the man, and shows that he was the slave of wayward impulses which he could neither repress nor command. Sir George Beaumont, Sheridan, and Gainsborough had dined together, and the latter was more than usually pleasant and witty. The meeting was so much to their mutual satisfaction that they agreed to have another day's happiness, and accordingly an early day was named when they should dine again together. They met ; but a cloud had descended upon the spirit of Gainsborough, and he sat silent, with a look of fixed melancholy

¹ W. Burger, *Trésors d'Art en Angleterre*, p. 388.



Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Tickell.

which no wit could dissipate. At length he took Sheridan by the hand, led him out of the room, and said, ‘Now, don’t laugh, but listen. I shall die soon—I know it—I feel it—I have less time to live than my looks infer ; but for this I care’ not. What oppresses my mind is this : I have many acquaintances and few friends ; and as I wish to have one worthy man to accompany me to the grave, I am desirous of bespeaking you—will you come ? Ay or no ?’ Sheridan could scarcely repress a smile as he made the required promise ; the looks of Gainsborough cleared up like the sunshine of one of his own landscapes ; throughout the rest of the evening his wit flowed and his humour ran over, and the minutes, like those of the poet, winged their way with pleasure.”

In 1788 began the memorable trial of Warren Hastings, in Westminster Hall. Gainsborough and Reynolds were among the spectators of that unparalleled scene. Gainsborough, whose seat was near an open window, suddenly felt something like the touch of an icy hand on his neck. On returning home, he complained of pain, and spoke to his wife and niece of the occurrence. Examining the part afflicted, they found a mark about the size of a shilling. Doctors were consulted, among them the famous physician, Sir John Hunter. They pronounced the lump to be merely a swelling of the glands, due to a chill. The swelling increased, however, and became more painful, and Dr. Hunter was obliged reluctantly to admit that the growth was malignant. “If this be a cancer,” said the painter, “I am a dead man.” He immediately began to set his affairs in order, and to prepare for the end. He had amassed nothing to be called a fortune, having spent and given freely in his life-time, but he was able to make a sufficient provision for his wife and daughters.

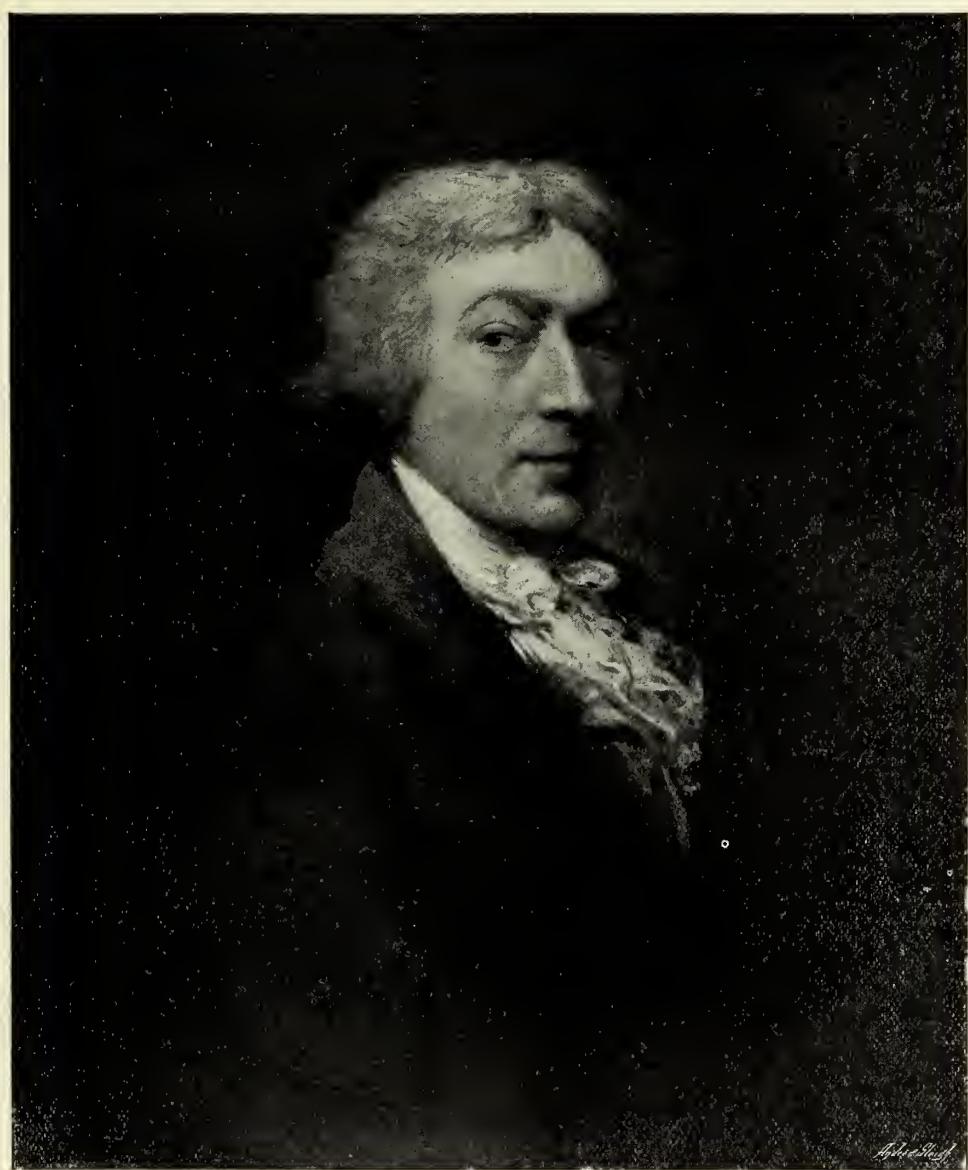
By July, the disease had made great progress, and Gainsborough felt the near approach of death. Looking back upon his career with the clear-sightedness of one who has no further part in the struggle, he recognised that he had not been altogether blameless in his conduct towards his great rival. He wrote to Reynolds, begging him to come and bid him goodbye. Sir Joshua’s description of their interview is full of pathos :—

“If any little jealousies had subsisted between us they were forgotten, in those moments of sincerity ; and he turned towards me as

one who was engrossed by the same pursuits, and who deserved his good opinion, by being sensible of his excellence."

His regret, he told Reynolds, was chiefly that he must leave his art, especially as he had now come to understand his own shortcomings, and, in his latest works, to correct them in a great measure. "We are all going to heaven, and Vandyke is of the company," he whispered, as Sir Joshua took leave of him. He died a few days after the interview, on the 2nd August, 1788. By his own wish, he was buried in Kew churchyard, near the grave of his friend Joshua Kirby. His nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, was chief mourner. The pall-bearers were Reynolds, West, Sir William Chambers, Bartolozzi, Paul Sandby, and Francis Cotes, and among those who followed him to the grave were Linley the musician, Mrs. Sheridan's brother, and Sheridan himself, true to his promise. His wife, who survived him rather more than ten years, was buried in the same grave, where Gainsborough Dupont was also laid in 1797. The pictures remaining in his studio at his death, were arranged, catalogued, and for a time exhibited at Schomberg House.

With Gainsborough's rank and claims as an artist, I propose to deal in a separate chapter. As a man, all we learn of him tends to prove him singularly happy and lovable in disposition, warm-hearted, generous, impulsive, and subject to those not unamiable weaknesses that are the usual defects of such qualities. Thus we are told that he was often imposed upon, that he gave money recklessly, and lavished the treasures of his brush on people who had no appreciation of their value. One such recipient is said to have papered a dressing-room with sketches. Thicknesse considered that "Of all men I ever knew, he possessed least of that worldly knowledge to enable him to make his own way into the notice of the great world." But this was surely rather a virtue than a failing! His most serious fault seems to have been a hot and hasty temper, swift to resent such offences as Reynolds, for example, would have affected to ignore. On one occasion he dashed a wet brush across the face of a finished portrait in his vexation at hearing an arrogant sitter inquire whether "that fellow Gainsborough" had finished his picture. A pompous lord, who desired him not to overlook the dimple in his chin, was dismissed with a forcible "Damn the dimple in your chin! I



Portrait of Gainsborough.

From the Picture in the possession of the Royal Academy of Arts.

shall paint neither the one nor the other!" Happy the man to whose charge no graver vices than these can be laid!

"In person," says Cunningham, "he was eminently handsome, and when he wished to please, no one had in greater perfection a ready grace and persuasive manner—gifts that cannot be acquired." Several portraits of himself bear out the former assertion. One, which was in his studio at his death, was presented by his daughter to the Royal Academy, and is here reproduced.

THE MAN GAINSBOROUGH.

THE character of Gainsborough seems quite transparent. Little as we know of a daily life which was too uneventful to tempt a chronicler, that little leaves us in no sort of doubt as to the class to which his personality belonged. He offers an almost ideal example of what used to be thought the artistic temperament *par excellence*. He was gay, careless, reckless even at times, with an irresponsibility of tongue which sometimes got him into scrapes. His disposition was as far removed from the critical as it could well be. In his letters we scarcely find a remark implying any desire to judge his fellow men or their works. He was content to play through life, enjoying beauty wherever he found it, and creating it whenever he could. Almost the only instance we can quote of any spoken stricture of his is the unlucky remark, made in the presence of an attorney, that not one lawyer in ten was worth hanging. He bubbled over with a shrewd humour, and enjoyed a reputation for repartee which we have now to take mostly on trust. One story quoted by Fulcher gives us some idea of his sense of fun. An old gray-headed tailor, called Fowler, sometimes sat to Gainsborough, on whose chimneypiece, among other curiosities, stood a beautiful preparation of an infant cranium, given to the Painter by a surgeon friend. ‘Fowler, without moving his position, continually peered at it askance, with inquisitive eye. ‘Ah ! Master Fowler,’ said the Painter, ‘that is a mighty curiosity.’ ‘What might it be, sir, if I may make so bold?’ ‘A whale’s eye,’ replied Gainsborough. ‘No, no ; never say so, Muster Gainsborough. Sir ! it is a little child’s skull !’ ‘You have hit it,’ said the wag. ‘Why, Fowler, you’re a witch ! But what will you think when I tell

you that it is the skull of Julius Cæsar when he was a little boy !!' ‘Laws,’ cried Fowler, ‘what a phenomenon !’ Foolery, perhaps, but ready foolery, with the true *vis comica* in it. His often quoted ‘repartee to a barrister,’ when under cross-examination, is ready enough, but, unluckily, its logic is not entirely sound. ‘I observe, Mr. Gainsborough, that you lay great stress on a “painter’s eye.” What do you mean by that expression ?’ ‘A painter’s eye,’ answered Gainsborough, ‘is to him what a lawyer’s tongue is to you.’” Repartees should illuminate as well as crush. Unfortunately this one only fulfils the latter function.

That the coarseness into which Gainsborough’s humour occasionally tumbled was not the result of vicious inclinations, but rather of a love of fun, and the conviction, which he has shared with so many others, that a spice of indecency—like an oath—is a great ornament to conversation, seems to be proved by what we know of his life. In his youth, or rather in his boyhood, he confesses, “he was deeply read in petticoats.” Like most of his contemporaries, he could drink—and yet his biographers, frank as they are, tell us nothing to his discredit in either of these directions. In one of his own letters, indeed, he suggests that Mrs. Gainsborough’s early return from what was intended to be a long visit to her native shire, was due to her distrust of how he might behave himself in this great wicked city alone. Fulcher speaks of his infirmity of temper, and contrasts him in that particular with the placid Reynolds. But all the instances of irritability to which we can point are merely additional proofs of his sensitive, highly strung, and to some extent irresponsible nature. The desire to wound seems to have been quite foreign to his nature, and when he quarrelled, a look was usually enough to bring about a reconciliation. With Reynolds alone does he seem to have persistently sulked. The President’s character was about as diametrically opposed to his as the limits of healthy human nature allow. Where the one man was all foresight, judgment and imperturbability, the other was *insouciance*, impulse, and excitement. In the picture of Sir Joshua’s interior, we find but a single detail which might be supposed to appeal to Gainsborough, and that is the open table, with its provision for six out of a dozen uninvited guests. The two men were, in fact, antipathetic ; the personality of each created discomfort in the other, and Gainsborough being the franker of the pair, the blame for

their quarrels—if we may call them quarrels—has come to rest mainly upon him. This view of Gainsborough's personality is confirmed by the fact that of all the men of “light and leading” of the time, the only one to whom he seems to have been instinctively drawn was Sheridan.

“In person,” says Fulcher, “Gainsborough was handsome, of a fair complexion, regular features, tall, and well-proportioned. His forehead, though not high, was broad and strongly marked, his nose Roman, his mouth and eye denoting humour and refinement; the general expression of his face thoughtful, yet not altogether pleasant. The most casual observer would have seen that much lay there; one gifted with greater insight would have said also, that something was wanting there; few could have affirmed what.” The head reproduced on page 65 is clearly that of one with more than a touch of caprice and its accompaniment, an uncertain temper. The expression is that of a dog whom one caresses, not carelessly, but with one’s vigilance alert. It may return the caress, or it may snap, but from apprehension rather than ill temper.

Before attempting an estimate of Gainsborough’s art, it may be well, perhaps, to quote a few of the anecdotes which confirm this sketch of his character. His generosity rests upon a hundred stories. He gave away both money and pictures lavishly. He gave twenty drawings to one female barbarian who *pasted* them on the walls of her dressing-room. Colonel Hamilton got the famous *Boy at the Stile* for a solo on the violin. Wiltshire, the carrier, earned a gallery of pictures by a few lifts in his waggon. Sometimes Gainsborough’s impulsiveness in this way ran away with him. At Mr. Agar’s he saw the *Velasquez* now in the Dulwich Gallery. “Tell your master,” he said to the servant, “that I will give him a thousand pounds for that picture.” The offer was promptly accepted, when the painter was obliged to confess he could afford no such sum.

The story of Sir Joshua’s portrait has been already told. Northcote tells us that Gainsborough once said that “Sir Joshua’s pictures in their most decayed state were better than those of any other artist at their best.” Going through the Academy with Sir George Beaumont, and examining one Reynolds after another, Gainsborough exclaimed, glancing at the galaxy of canvases, “Damn him! How various he is!”

The heat of his impulses was never better shown than in his dealings with the little gipsy, John Hill, “a boy on whom nature had bestowed



Madame Bacceli.

more than an ordinary share of good looks, with an intelligence rarely found in a woodman's cottage. Gainsborough looked at the boy with a painter's eye, and acting as usual from the impulse of the moment, offered to take him home and provide for his future welfare. Jack Hill, as Gainsborough always called him, was at once arrayed in his Sunday best and sent with the gentleman, laden with as many virtuous precepts as would 'have filled a copy-book.' Mrs. Gainsborough was delighted with the boy, and the young ladies equally rejoiced in such a good-looking addition to their establishment. Mrs. Fischer, indeed, talked of adopting him. But whether, like the wild Indian of the prairie, Jack pined for the unrestrained freedom of his native woods—the blackberries and the roasted sloes; or, what is more likely,² feared chastisement for his many ungrateful doings, after a brief trial, he ran away, and though brought back and forgiven by his kind-hearted master, he wilfully threw away a much better chance than Dick Whittington started with on his romantic journey to the thrice-repeated City sovereignty. At Gainsborough's death his widow kindly procured for Jack an admission into Christ's Hospital. Here we lose sight of the boy; he is, however, immortalised by the Painter's pencil, and amongst all Gainsborough's studies of peasant children, Jack is distinguished by his personal beauty."³

The story already alluded to of Colonel Hamilton's solo is so graphically told by Smith, in his life of Nollekens, that I must quote it here:—"Upon our arrival at Mr. Gainsborough's, the artist was listening to a violin, and held up his finger to Mr. Nollekens as a request for silence. Colonel Hamilton (who was not only looked upon as one of the first of amateur violin players, but also one of the first of gentlemen pugilists) was playing to him in so exquisite a style, that Gainsborough exclaimed, 'Now, my dear Colonel, if you will but go on, I will give you that picture of the *Boy at the Stile*, which you have so often wished to purchase of me.' Mr. Gainsborough, not knowing how long Nollekens would hold his tongue, gave him a book of sketches to choose two from which he had promised him. As Gainsborough's versatile fancy was at this period devoted to music, his attention was so riveted to the tones of the violin, that for nearly half an hour he was motionless; after which the Colonel requested that a hackney-coach might be sent for, wherein he carried off the picture. Mr. Gainsborough, after he had given

Mr. Nollekens the two drawings he had selected, requested him to look at a model of an ass's head which he had just made. 'You should model more with your thumbs,' observed Nollekens; 'thumb it about till you get it into shape.' 'What,' said Gainsborough, 'in this manner?' having taken up a bit of clay, and looking at a picture of Abel's Pomeranian dog which hung over the chimney-piece,—'this way?' 'Yes,' said Nollekens, 'you'll do a great deal more with your thumbs.' Mr. Gainsborough, by whom I was standing, observed to me, 'You enjoyed the music, my little fellow, and I am sure you long for this model; there, I will give it to you; and I am delighted with it still.' These stories help to complete the picture of a man who must have been loved by those admitted to his intimacy.

As a painter Gainsborough was the artistic temperament made visible. It would not be rash to call him both the first and the best of the impressionists. In every task he set himself his aim was purely pictorial. He felt no temptation to be literary, to be anecdotic, to be didactic, to be anything but artistic within the limits marked out by his own emotions and the materials he was using. His pictures are examples of pure reaction between object and subject, and their value depends more, perhaps, than in the case of any other man, on the quality of the senses of which they are so sincere an outcome. With Reynolds deliberation counted for much; Gainsborough's good things are impromptus. We might almost say that when he deliberated he was lost. A sympathetic sitter seems to have had power at once to evoke a creation from his brain. In the *Mrs. Siddons*, the *Mrs. Graham*, the *Lady Sheffield*, the *Lady Mulgrave*, the *Bacelli*, the *Mrs. Beaufoy*, the *Lord Archibald Campbell*, and a host more, there is no sign of preparation. The conception as we see it is the conception as it first offered itself to Gainsborough. In things like the *Bailie Family*, where the problem was too complex to be grasped as a whole, we have a corresponding failure. This group can be divided into three or four parts, each complete in itself. The two children on our left make one picture; the mother and her infant, a second; the father leaning on the chair, a third. The same fault, no doubt, can be found with most large groups of portraits, but in Gainsborough the dislocation is both more obvious than with other men of similar rank, and more clearly due to inability to make thought

do the work of inspiration. When Reynolds had to paint the Marlborough family he failed to contrive an incident which should bring them all within the circle of one idea. In fact it is difficult to think of any one except Rembrandt who has absolutely succeeded in that very difficult task, and he only did it twice. But by dint of thought Sir Joshua did manage to make all his persons contribute to the *arabesque*. You could not take a figure from his canvas without spoiling the rest. Looking at a Gainsborough you feel instinctively that if he had been compelled, by some *force majeure*, to think, he would have been literally hurt. Put the right stimulus before him, in the shape of a pretty woman, a lovely scene in nature, any sensuous passage of life, and a lovely piece of art would be the certain reaction. But I doubt whether he ever felt the slightest temptation to realize on canvas any scene, or action, or emotion he had read of in a book. His brain answered with marvelous celerity and purity to a stimulus received through the eye, but the incubatory process was altogether foreign to its nature.

Some critics have professed to see in Gainsborough a landscape rather than a portrait painter. One biographer goes so far as to declare that "those critics who had any discernment thought his landscapes superior to his portraits." It is not difficult to understand how such an idea, mistaken as it is, came to be formed. Gainsborough was not a draughtsman. He did not love Ingres' *probité de l'art* for its own sake. Drawing belongs to those preparatory elements in art which never appealed to him. Not that he couldn't draw. In his boyhood and youth he drew carefully and well, undergoing absolute pain, one would think, in the winning of such accuracy as we see in the two pencil heads from Dublin (pages 12, 13), and in the much later *Parish Clerk* (page 16). But, speaking generally, the silhouettes or linear proportions of things did not stir his fancy. It was with mass, colour, tone that he produced his effects. Now, the human eye is very easily trained to perceive faults in the drawing of the human figure. We all of us have an instinctive knowledge of how long legs and arms, necks and noses ought to be, and when liberties are taken in those directions we are quick in abuse. With landscape it is different. Few people have observed the structure of the ground, the build and curves of trees, the characteristic

forms of clouds, with the precision of Mr. Ruskin. In short, a deficiency which did something to lessen the pleasure received from Gainsborough's portraits was not perceived in his landscapes, although it was there in even greater measure ; and so critics, who were unable to distinguish between the representative and the artistic elements of his work, put the latter on a higher plane than the former. This idea has been confirmed this summer by the treatment meted out to one of his finest portraits, the *Duchess of Richmond*, lent to the " Fair Women " exhibition by Mr. Leopold de Rothschild. In general arrangement, in colour, in all that makes for decorative unity and force, it is one of the master's finest productions. Unfortunately the lady's right arm is much too long and rather straight and stiff. This defect was pounced upon at once, and every attempt to praise the picture for what it was—perhaps the finest piece of pure *art* in the whole show—was met with the objection, "That arm ! Why, it is a foot too long !" It is as if we refused to admire a song of Burns's because it had a false concord in the middle.

In his early years Gainsborough painted landscape with the minutest care. I know pictures dating probably from about 1748, which excel any Dutchman in the elaboration with which such things as the ruts in a country road and the grasses beside it, or the gnarled trunk and rough bark of some ancient willow, are made out. In the National Gallery of Ireland we have one such canvas. It represents just such a characteristic bit of Suffolk scenery as Wynants would have chosen had he carried his Batavian patience over the North Sea. Across a sand-pit in the foreground a deep country road winds away into the distance, where the roofs of a village suggest its objective. An old horse, a silvery sky with a fine arabesque of windy clouds, and a few old weather-stunted trees complete the picture. The execution is so elaborate that the surface is fused into one unbroken breadth of enamel. The tones are high and even, the colour cool, almost to excess, the design youthfully symmetrical. The *Great Cornard Wood*, in the National Gallery, cannot have been painted very much later than this. Its colour has the same gray coolness, its tone is as high and its execution almost as elaborate. The spirit of the work is still essentially representative and imitative. It was not until much later that the personally expressive element began to dominate its author's

work. As long as he remained in Suffolk he seems to have been rather the student than the creator. It was in 1758 that he wrote the letter to an unidentified attorney in Colchester, in which he defends the roughness of his paint, but the supposed defect must have been very slight, for even after he left Ipswich we find him still painting smoothly and with solicitude for the fusion of his touch.

The impatience, which was one of his defects, betrays itself, I think, in the large number of unfinished pictures which have come down to us from these Suffolk days. Perhaps his employers were not exacting ; perhaps, even in portraiture, most of his work was uncommissioned. However that may be, unfinished portraits and portrait groups in his early manner exist in scores. Even in their incompleteness they show how carefully Gainsborough laid the foundations on which his future breadth and freedom of eye and hand were to be built.

During these preparatory years, Gainsborough often made use of a red ground, a practice learnt no doubt from his favourite, Jan Wynants (who must surely, one thinks, have been a "Hobson's choice"). Those who haunt auction rooms and other places where they sell, continually come across small canvases, often very red in tone, on which hedgerow trees overshadow small groups of people, old white horses, donkeys, stiles, and other rural *impedimenta*. When the figures are of considerable size, the heads are well modelled and the draperies well cast, but the motives are apt to be artificial and the general results slightly prophetic of the ways of the modern photographer. These are *débris* from Gainsborough's time at Ipswich, and occasionally they have a charm which, in its own way, is as personal and penetrating as that of a masterpiece from their author's years of glory. I particularly remember a small portrait group, "Mr. and Mrs. Pond," which combined a most dainty precision of brush with every sort of evidence you could ask for of the painter's sincerity and delight in his task. Such a picture as this was conceived and realised in the true spirit of the eighteenth century. It is in painting what the *Spectator* is in letters : graceful, concise, idyllic in scent if not in constitution, materialistic in a sweet, unconscious sort of way, clean, and scholarly. The passion, the sense of infinity, the gorgeous imagination which is content to send you questing down the same glow-

ing line as itself, none of these notes of Gainsborough's later life are even foreshadowed. Those whose experience has convinced them that all great artists, with hardly an exception, have grown from work like this to their



The Maypole.

definitive power, will hope much from such a picture ; to others it will seem the last word of a sweet but narrow soul.

Gainsborough blossomed at Bath. There, for the first time, his art became more personal than objective. The demands of a busy town, the

temptations of society, the increase in his *clientèle* for portraits, made it more difficult than before to get away into the fields to study nature. The knowledge acquired in the East was put under contribution, and the painter began to depend mainly on his accumulated impressions. In all probability he now first made the acquaintance of Vandyck. All round Bath there are great houses filled with the masterpieces of the Anglo-Flemish knight, and although we have no direct testimony to refer to, internal evidence points strongly to the truth of such an assumption.¹ Thicknesse might here be of use. Through his family connections he would be able to get the *entrée* for his friend where the latter's talent would be an insufficient passport. Vandyck's backgrounds influenced Gainsborough as much as his figures. Granting that I am right in my suppositions, it will be from his first migration that we must date Gainsborough's characteristic style in landscape as well as in portraiture. Several of Vandyck's landscape studies are still extant. Mr. George Scharf believes that one in the Print Room of the British Museum was used for the background of the Blenheim *Charles I.*, now in the National Gallery. To me this seems by no means certain, but at least the drawing, slight as it is, shows that Vandyck anticipated Gainsborough's way of looking at fields and trees, if he did not actually suggest it.

The Stratford portrait of Garrick, the *Lady Ray* (page 22), the *Parish Clerk*, and the landscapes reproduced on pages 19 and 35, all belong to the Bath period. The *Parish Clerk* was probably the first in point of time. It shows a good deal of the timidity of his early years, and is quite free from the delight in his own powers of brush, which makes, for instance, the handling of the crimson dress in the *Lady Ray* so remarkable. In 1768 Gainsborough wrote a letter to Garrick in which he described a conception for a portrait of Shakespeare, which he had been obliged to abandon through inability to carry it out. "I was willing," he writes, "like an ass as I am, to expose myself a little out of the simple portrait way, and had a notion of showing where that

¹ Gainsborough made, from memory, a reduced copy of the Great Vandyck at Wilton House, the *Family of the Earl of Pembroke*. I have not seen it, but C. R. Leslie ventures to say it is, to his mind, "much finer than the original, in its present state," and "I think (he goes on) it possible it may have some finer qualities than the original possessed in any state."

inimitable poet had his ideas from, by an immediate ray darting down upon his eye turned up for the purpose." We may be sure that if Gainsborough had carried out this notion it would not have seemed so funny in paint as it does in words. He had, in fact, already used a somewhat similar idea for his *Parish Clerk*, and that with complete felicity. The old man is looking up from the large open Bible to where the sunlight is pouring down through the window upon his venerable head. Of all Gainsborough's pictures this is, perhaps, the most careful, the most caressing, if I may be allowed the word, in design. The flow of every line, the accent of every mass, has been pondered and re-pondered until the unity, if not the force, of Rembrandt has been reached.

If we may take our faith in both hands and trust to internal evidence, it was between the production of the *Parish Clerk* and the next on our list of Bath pictures that Gainsborough was introduced to Vandyck. In the *Lady Ray* his old solicitude over detail survives in parts, especially in the painting of the lace and flowers. But the conception has the *insouciance* of Vandyck, and in the treatment of the crimson silk the effect of his example is unmistakable. Hitherto Gainsborough had dwelt upon the fall and fold of draperies. Henceforward he makes them mainly the vehicle for fine colour. His technic is the Fleming's with a difference. Gainsborough's hand was lighter than Vandyck's, and his taste in colour more luminous, airy, and transparent. But both men won their effects by sometimes over-sharp oppositions between the cool lights of their silks and satins and the glowing, transparent shadows in the crumpled folds. Perhaps the finest piece of colour created by Vandyck in this country is the *Charles I.*, now in the Salon Carré of the Louvre. Without the sheen and *finesse* of a fine Gainsborough, it has the elements out of which all his best qualities as a technical painter were developed. It has, too, like everything else by the Flemish master, the distinction won by dwelling only on those details of *allure* which make for that quality.

Here again Gainsborough seems to have been awakened by Vandyck to fresh possibilities in the art he practised. Sincerity had been his governing virtue in Suffolk. The people he had painted there were

homely, healthy, bucolic, and so he had shown them. A boy fresh from Hayman's studio would be satisfied with their comeliness. His ambition might well aim no higher than to record it at its best. But when, after ten years of happy drudgery, he moved away to new scenes and there fell into the society of the ladies and cavaliers of Vandyck, new horizons would open before him. He would perceive, for the first time, what selection could do, and how a greater race of men and women than he had dreamt of lay among the tints on his palette. Gainsborough was a rarer genius than Vandyck. His art is more personal, more exquisite, more alive with temperament, than the Fleming's. But he required a spur. Many things in his life show that he lacked initiative; his delay in Suffolk, his contentment with Bath when he might have had London, his indifference to other countries and their doings, all these point to a nature which did not instinctively seek or experiment. We know he scarcely ever opened a book. It is quite possible that in those days of no public collections and no exhibitions, he may have lived to the age of thirty without ever having seen a picture by Vandyck or any one else which could drive his thoughts beyond the realism in which he had been trained. To us who have the finest gallery in the world at our doors, who have every winter a new selection of masterpieces to study, who can keep ourselves at least moderately *au fait* with what is being done at the moment through the Academy and the other summer exhibitions, it is difficult to realize in what isolation a painter might work in the eighteenth century. A man who was as delighted as Gainsborough with the example of a second-rate Dutchman cannot have been familiar with the really great old masters, and so one need not wonder that, when Vandyck first swam into his ken, a new era opened for his art.

Between Gainsborough at Bath and Gainsborough in London there is no sharp line of demarcation. Vandyck once found remained our painter's load-star to the end. "We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyck is of the company," he whispered on his death-bed. The effect upon him of the capital was to enrich his manner, to develop his personality, to give him a confidence in himself which he did not feel in the same degree while remote from the centre of things. In London his brush became more bold, his impasto richer, his colour more original

in its combinations, and more personal. Towards the end of his life we find signs that he had made the acquaintance of Rubens and Titian. Some of his last landscapes especially remind us of such things as the *Farm at Laeken*, of Sir Peter Paul, and the *Shepherds in a Storm*, of Vecelli. But of this influence he was probably unconscious, and his main development from first to last was determined by the impressions received from the first great artist with whom he came in contact.

Take as typical examples of Gainsborough's London period, the following six pictures :—*The Blue Boy* (1779), *Mrs. Beaufoy* (1780), *Colonel St. Leger* (1782), *Mrs. Siddons* (1784), and *The Mall, St. James's Park* (1786). Contrasted with the best works of his Bath time, all these show a larger handling, a richer substance, a more concentrated conception, a completer self-dependence. But there is no difference in kind between any one of them and, for instance, Wiltshire's *Hay Wain*. Such alteration as there is is strictly development, a development due in the main to the knowledge their author had acquired, that his powers and ideas were as good as those of any possible rival. The painter of the *Mrs. Beaufoy*, the *Mrs. Siddons*, and *The Mall*—my favourites among the pictures quoted—must have known that his fame had little to fear, even from that of Sir Joshua, and that nothing was wanted for a triumphant success but truth to himself. The *Mall*, especially, seems to me the finest picture in its own class ever painted. And that class includes all the Watteaus, to say nothing of the Lancrets, and Fragonards. Walpole hit upon a delicious phrase when he called it “all a' flutter, like a lady's fan !” No more delightful combination of vivacity with truth, of lightness with power, of momentariness with eternal verity, has ever come upon the world from a studio.

A comparison between the *Mrs. Beaufoy* and the *Mrs. Siddons* casts a brilliant light upon one secret of Gainsborough's success, and indeed of the success of every portrait painter of the first rank. Look at the *Mrs. Beaufoy*, and note how an airy, graceful, *désinvolture* governs every line. There is nothing severe, nothing set, nothing big with possibilities, in the whole conception. The sitter was a beautiful and happy woman, with no duties to the world beyond those of a wife and mother. And this notion breathes from every stroke of the painter's brush, the canvas

is all gaiety, lightness, and life. Mrs. Siddons, on the other hand, was a public institution. Her character had more than a touch of severity ; her features had reflected superbly the passions of Lady Macbeth, but had failed with the adorable playfulness of Rosalind. With all her beauty she was a kind of female Johnson. Her nose was not so long for nothing, and Gainsborough instinctively perceived that a somewhat solemn flow of mass and line would afford a more coherent setting to her loveliness than the easier and more careless arrangement he chose for Mrs. Beaufoy. The infinite wells of harmony that lie in all things perceptible by our senses are used to perfection in both portraits, but in each Gainsborough has frankly taken his keynote from his sitter.

The *Blue Boy* tradition receives its strongest internal support from what is, perhaps, our best justification in putting the picture a thought below its author's highest level. It is a little wanting in spontaneity. If we had never heard of Sir Joshua's pronouncement we might have guessed that Gainsborough had some ulterior purpose in painting it. The French term *voulu* describes one part of its effect exactly. The warming of the blue is over-forced. In his desire to confound the President, Gainsborough has come near to supplying a proof that the President was right. What Sir Joshua said was that a cold colour like blue should never predominate. In the portrait of Master Buttall blue, as a colour, is almost completely lost in the warm greens and browns which fill the numerous deep folds of the boy's silk habit. The background, too, is over warm, and altogether the picture is without the simplicity which marks things like the *Lady Sheffield*, the *Mrs. Sheridan*, the *Mrs. Fane*, or the three superb portraits which hang in Mr. Alfred de Rothschild's dining-room in Seomore Place. As refutations of Sir Joshua we could name many Gainsboroughs which beat the *Blue Boy*. The *Mrs. Siddons* does so ; so do the *Lady Sheffield*, the *Lord Archibald Campbell*, the *Duchess of Richmond*, to name only a few.

Another tint, intractable to any one but a born colourist, to which Gainsborough often recurred, was a rather cold canary yellow, not the hue of a vigorous young bird, but of a faded and fatigued old songster. It is the colour of a bright tube of Naples yellow. This tint prevails in some of his best pictures, notably in a three-quarter length of

Miss Hibbert, now in the possession of Baron Alphonse de Rothschild, in Paris, and in the still finer *Squire and Mrs. Hilliard* (?) walking in a Park, which was at the "Old Masters" in 1885. If to blue and yellow we add black and white, we shall complete the list of Gainsborough's peculiar fancies in colour keynotes. Black he seems to have used chiefly upon small canvases, in the *Lady Mulgrave*, for instance, and the *Mrs. Fitzherbert*, now in the Grafton Gallery. White he represented with an exquisite *finesse*. I do not remember a finer example of his treatment of this colour than the full-length of *Mrs. Portman* which Lord Portman sent from Bryanston Park to the "Old Masters" in 1893. This picture dates from his Bath period, and must have been painted not much later than the *Lady Ray*. *Mrs. Portman* is a lady of much presence, not beautiful, but with a face to which kindness and a robust good sense lend irresistible charm. She must have been about fifty when she sat to Gainsborough, who devoted unusual care to the painting of her head, as well as to the modulation of the subtle tones which produce the effect of white silk in the dress. Reynolds, too, and Romney were fond of white, and if any one wishes to be convinced of the superiority of Gainsborough as a colourist, he has only to compare their treatment of this particular problem with his.

A great deal of argument has been spent upon such questions as whether Gainsborough was a better painter than Reynolds, whether he was best in landscape, or in portrait, or in fancy pictures ; whether he was equal to the great masters of the French, Flemish, and Spanish schools, and so on. Such questions people must answer, to some extent, according to their individual tastes, for after all we have no right to pronounce upon the relative importance of the different qualities which go to make a great painter. We may say that Gainsborough was a finer colourist than Reynolds, but then Sir Joshua excelled him in directions which, to some, may appear more important than colour. The second point is still more difficult to discuss. To me it seems incontestable that many of his portraits rise to heights in art unapproached by his landscapes. The whole bent of Gainsborough's mind was towards concentration. One detail of his practice has come down to us which throws a strong light upon this. It was his habit, when a sitter left him, to

close the window of his painting-room and look at what he had done by the scanty daylight which made its way through a round hole cut in the shutter. This enabled him to see at a glance whether his work were in focus, whether he had succeeded or not in getting the subordination he wanted, or, on the other hand, whether some detail had crept into an undesired importance. In a portrait, where the head provides a natural, dominant centre, such a practice would be of the greatest value ; but in a landscape it might, and no doubt did, confirm him in the tendency to emptiness, of which he has been so often accused. No great painter has restricted himself so invariably to the pictorial theme as Gainsborough. Even Rembrandt, between whose career and his time are many curious parallelisms, was not so strict as he. He built every picture round some simple pictorial notion, and as soon as that notion was complete he laid down his brush. Sitters are more exacting than landscapes. To please them he had often to give a head more substance and definition than he would have cared for himself, and this was excellent discipline. We may be sure that we have his patrons to thank in more senses than one for many a masterpiece.

As for Gainsborough's position in the hierarchy of artists, it depends on qualities analogous to those which have put Burns in the front rank among poets. It is easy to say what he had not. It is easy to point out that his ambition was narrow, that his culture was not great, that his faculty for taking thought was non-existent, and that in certain petty matters of equipment he has been surpassed by many unimportant people. But his art was all art. It was the pure, spontaneous expression of a personality into which no anti-artistic leaven had been mixed. In his finest portraits of women he touches a height reached by no one else. The *Mrs. Siddons*, the *Mrs. Beaufoy*, the *Lady Sheffield*, the *Mrs. Graham*, the *Mrs. Sheridan*, are delicious melodies in colour, miracles of distinction, unrivalled records of the beauty of woman. No other painter has so dazzled us with means so slight. Many of his most perfect things are at once superb in colour and scarcely more than monochromes. The *Lady Mulgrave* to which I have so often alluded is a case in point. Her provoking features are enframed in a mass of powdered hair which tells with felicitous audacity against the rich, diaphanous black about her

shoulders. The effect is like magic. The flesh painting which extorted the praise of Sir Joshua is here too, almost at its best, never, indeed, to be excelled except perhaps in the marvellous head of Mrs. Siddons and in the heads of Maria Linley and her brother at Knole. I have named Burns. The Ayrshire ploughman lives by the purity of his genius, by the quality, in fact, of his gift. Gainsborough will do the same. His pictures will not attract the scribe. Nobody will laboriously recount every stage in the process of their genesis. They afford no purchase for that confusion of the artist with the fabulist which has been, and perhaps still is, such a hindrance to the right comprehension of art. They are simply gems born of the fire struck out at the contact of a rare artistic spirit with the beauty of the world.

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